THE PSYCHE OF THE GAROS

DR TARUNCHANDRA SINHA

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Preface

The title of this paper has been selected after careful consideration. The word 'psyche' has been used by the psychologists to mean mind, which covers both the conscious and the unconscious parts of it. Philosophers use this word in different senses to mean mind, soul, consciousness, etc. In this publications, I have used the word 'psyche' only in the psychological sense, i.e., to mean the mind, in its conscious and unconscious aspects. This connotation in which the word has been used, should be borne in mind and should not be confused with the philosophers' connotation.

As in the case of individual patients coming under psychoanalytical treatment, it is necessary to know the life history in detail, so also to know a people, it is necessary to know their manners, customs, religious belief, etc., in detail. Not only this, I have found it essential to live among them to understand their mental reactions to a particular situation and to understand their sense of value, as also to ascertain the depth and nature of their feeling and belief. All these are absolutely necessary for an attempt to understand or to gain some idea of their mind that works behind the different institutions which formed part of their social structure.

When I started my field work amongst the Garos, I used to visit their villages from Shusung, my home village, which is situated at a distance of about two and half miles in the south, i.e., in Mymensingh district from the border of the Garo Hills. Soon it became clear to me that language difficulty stood in our way of understanding each other and of winning confidence. The Garos were shy to open their mind to me. Although many of them were known to me for years, yet when questions regarding their social and religious rites were put, they were reluctant to speak out. In many cases, they cut short their statements and went away abruptly. There were many Garos, living in Mymensingh border, who were our tenants. They also did not like to open their heart to me. The other people of the plains often look upon the Garos spitefully and mention them as uncivilized and hence low. Such age long behaviour from the people of the plains have made a mark in the minds of the Garos, who now think that the non-Garo civilized people laugh and scoff at their social and religious beliefs and customs. It took some time for me to win their confidence. To get over these difficulties, first of all, I decided to go and live in their village, which I did with some amount of success. Then gradually, I picked up the Garo language. These two things

helped me a great deal to remove their inferiority sense and their suspicion. Sympathy and interest towards them yielded good results. At first, I had to take pains to convince them of the purpose of my work. As time passed the situation turned in my favour. Thanks are due to the Government of Assam and the Deputy Commissioner of Garo Hills, who kindly gave me necessary permission to carry on the work, after they were convinced of the type of my work. Before the permission was granted, the then Government of Assam made enquiries about the bona fides of my work. Besides Garo Hills being a partially excluded area, the then British Government were possibly more strict in my case. Here I should mention that the major portion of the Garo Hills was included in our estate, before the British Government took it away from my grandfather in the year 1872 by a piece of arbitrary legislation known as the Garo Hills Act. Since then the Government did not like our access in the Garo Hills. They were apprehensive lest we should organise some sort of agitation against them with the help of the Garos. Needless to say, this only proved their weakness rather than their strength.

When the language difficulty was overcome, gradually the Garos became more friendly and co-operative with me. But the difficulty of acquiring first-hand knowledge of the people of different groups of the Garos, living in different parts of the hills, became a problem. Want of road facilities compelled me to tour the whole area on foot over hills and dales, along foot tracks. This itself was a difficult job. There being no marts in the interior of the hills except at Baghmara, Tura, Emangiri, and a few other places distantly situated, near the borders of the district, I had to depend entirely on my own supply of ration, every bit of which I had to carry with the help of the porters.

In the interior of the hills, the foot tracks run through dense forest, where wild animals are often met with. So the march from one village to another was not only tiresome but also was undertaken with considerable risk, particularly where the track lay through areas which were infested with wild elephants, bisons, buffaloes, tigers (man-eaters) and bears, etc.

It has been my endeavour to know, as much as I could, the mental mechanism of the Garo tribe and to trace the psychic factors working behind their main social or religious institutions and beliefs. In doing so, also to trace, if possible, the psychic level of their culture from the standpoint of psycho-analysis.

I consulted Major Playfair's monograph on the Garos, which

is the only book of some importance in the field. But my data collected from the villagers, on the spot, differ in some respects from the findings of Major Playfair's. Although he was in a sense pioneer in collecting the anthropological data of the Garos, I understand, he as the Deputy Commissioner of the Garo Hills called Laskars, Nokmas and Kamals to Tura for collecting factual data from them. He also consulted the missionaries who were working in the hills. Under these circumstances, it is not very surprising to read the influence of missionaries and of Christian faith in his book. Yet it must be said that his monograph is the only valuable published work about the Garos. Besides this, there are only a few published articles of scrappy nature. I had, therefore, to depend upon my own collection of data and exertions mainly. A list of books and articles consulted, for writing this book, has been given in the bibliography at the end of the paper.

My field work covers a period of about ten years from 1936 to 1947. During this period, I visited Garo Hills several times in a year. Period of my stay varied from ten days to three months at a time. I find I have come to like the people. Their bold, frank and simple behaviour as well as their kind hospitality when they become friendly, deserve special mentioning. They are humble yet proud, submissive but dignified, honest and good natured people.

Mention must be made of my chief guide and interpretor, my good friend Rojing Shangma of Fanda village at the foot of the Garo Hills in Mymensingh. He has travelled widely in the Garo Hills and also joined the Pioneer Corps during the World War I. He never failed me in my trips in the hills. He understands almost all the group languages. He taught me the Garo language. I know my work would have been many times more difficult without his ungrudging help and assistance.

It is said that knowledge is power. In this sense, knowledge about anything means gaining of some power over the vast realm of the world, yet unknown to man. Specifically in the present publication, attempt has been made to trace the unconscious psychic factors causing to establish certain institutions in the Garo society. Apart from the academic interest, this knowledge would help the social workers and the government concerned to understand the Garos and to devise ways and means by which gradual reforms may be introduced for the betterment of the Garos. Random and half understood reform measures may cause gradual extinction of the tribe. To ensure progress the vital nature and character of the people, for whom reform measures are introduced, must have to be clearly understood beforehand. Success of social reforms

rests mostly on the understanding of this vital make up of the people concerned. As far as I have been able to trace them, the inner vital psychic forces at work amongst the Garos have been briefly indicated in the body of this book.

I have noted their observances and rituals from my direct observation. As this publication is meant to be a psychological one, I have mentioned only the main features of the Garo society in short, which have some bearing on the understanding of the peoples' psyche. I do not mean that all the other anthropological collections have no bearing, but incorporation of all the materials collected would increase the bulk of the book to about twenty times its present volume.

Some of my papers about the Garos, on psycho-analytical lines, were published in different issues of "SAMIKSA", the Journal of the Indian Psycho-analytical Society. References of some of the more important and relevant papers, viz., (1) The dreams of the Garos, (2) Attempt at interpretation of a Garo dream, (3) Formation of Garo clan, (4) Garo songs, (5) A psychological study of colour preference of the Garos, are given in the appended bibliography. These articles, if read as a supplement, will help the readers to properly evaluate and judge better the merit of the present publication. They will also indicate more elaborately the different psychological aspects of the wide field of the Garo life covered in this study. These articles read together with the contents of this publication will be helpful to assess more conclusively the soundness of the conclusions arrived at from the psycho-analytical standpoint. For tehcnical reasons, unfortunately, these published papers could not be incorporated as chapters of this publication. Further data were collected after the publication of some of these papers, which resulted in some modification of statements made therein. In case of any discrepancy, the statements made in the body of this publication should be considered more correct.

I have in my collection 850 songs of different types, 502 actual dreams, 201 stories, 230 names of deities, records of 500 cases of colour and form preference and 162 photographs taken from different aspects of the Garo life. Each of these subjects is good enough to be treated in separate volumes. I have a mind to publish them, gradually, wherein I shall treat them in detail. For the purpose of this book, I have only taken representative samples from each group to show their character.

No one before me published any psychological treatise on the

Garos. The psychological discussions on different problems of the Garos contained in this publication are my original contributions. I have mentioned in proper places the other important theories in the particular fields and have given my views on them.

It is not my claim that I have explained the psychological implications of all the institutions and beliefs, etc., of the Garos. It is only an attempt to explain some of the more important factors of the Garo society from the psychological or rather psycho-analytical standpoint. There are large fields for further research work, in this line, both amongst the Garos in detail, as also amongst other tribes of India. Most of the valuable data will be lost to us, if the work is not taken in hand early. Things are changing very rapidly, and the country is moving fast towards progress. It will be a great loss to science if the valuable data be not collected now. Much knowledge could be gained from the primitive people, particularly the science of Psychology, Anthropology and Sociology as also medicine and religion would be poorer if these materials be lost to us. The problem is a big one and cannot be tackled satisfactorily by individual efforts. Institutions having adequate resources and particularly the government should come forward to help the willing workers and to organise the work for collection of materials in this line, in such a manner that the valuable data of all the tribes in India may be collected before they are lost to us.

Lastly, it may be mentioned that the contents of this book formed the thesis submitted to the Calcutta University on which the degree of Doctor of Science was conferred upon the author in 1955.

PRONUNCIATION OF GARO WORDS

A	is pronounced as	'a'	in English word	Ask
C	,,	'ch'	,,	Chance
D	,,	'th'	,,	The
E	,,	'e'	,,	Met
G	,,	'g'	,,	Go
I	,,	'i'	,,	Kin
O	,,	'o'	,,	Go
S	,,	'sh'	,,	Short
U	,,	'u'	,,	Put
TH	,,	'th'	,,	Theme
Y	,,	'y'	,,	Shy
SH	,,	'sh'	,,	My

T is always soft. Usually each vowel is pronounced separately even when two or more of them occur consecutively. Other letters are pronounced as in English.

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CHAPTER I

Introduction

The Garo Hills, the main homeland of the Garos, is the south-western district of Assam. Its area is about 3,152 sq. miles, and its population according to the 1951 census is 2,42,075 including the non-Garo population. The total Garo population of the district is 1,97,077 of whom 1,02,821 are males and 94,256 females. The area lies between 25° 57′ 18″ and 25° 9′ 20″ north latitude and 91° 0′ 0″ and 90° 0′ 10″ east longitude.

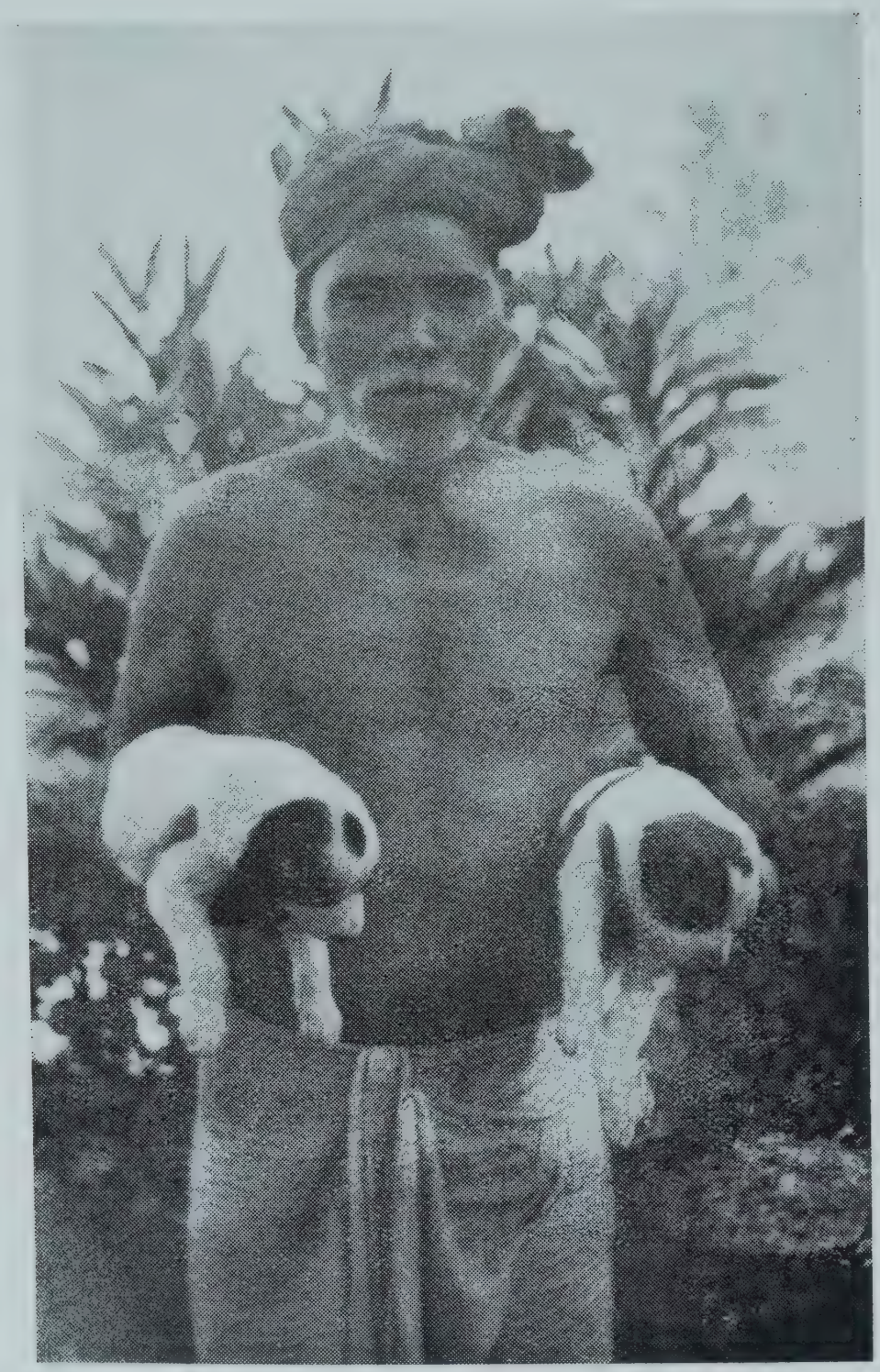
The whole area is practically hilly and is covered with dense forest consisting of large trees, shrubs and undergrowths of various kinds. Assam forest is well-known for its dense character, and, in places, it is impervious even to wild elephants. The main ridge lies east and west near about the south. The highest peak of the hills of this district is about four thousand feet high. The average length of the district from east to west is about seventy miles, and it measures almost the same from north to south. It is, therefore, roughly speaking, something like a square. Hillocks and ranges gradually become lower towards the north and also towards south from the central ridge. There are isolated hillocks, however, scattered on all directions which rise above the height of the neighbouring hillocks. The eastern area consists more of lime and sand stone, and the western portion, on the other hand, consists more of other rocks, particularly, in the central ridge. This being the main topography of the area, rivers and rivulets naturally rising from the central ridge flow usually either towards north or towards the south. There are small strips of valley between two small hillocks or ranges covered with dense forest. This forms a good habitat for wild animals. The Garo Hills is famous for its beautiful wild elephants. It is also a good ground for bisons, wild buffaloes, tigers, leopards, bears, boars and antilopes of different kinds, as also for game birds. There is but one cart road running from Bagmara to Damra via Tura, the headquarters of the district. It is a fair-weather road for vehicular traffic. In the rains, however, most of the temporary bridges become unsuitable for traffic. The other short roads run from Tura on to Phulbari and the other to Mankachar, the border region on the north and west of the district. There is a camel track running very close to the central ridge connecting Damra with Tura being linked with Siju. The Assam Trunk Road runs on the north of the district. The inhabitants of

the place usually have to walk over the hills following the foot tracks to go from one place to another. Where the rivers or rivulets are sufficiently deep, people use dugout boats to cover the distance when necessary. Towards the centre of the district, boats as a means of conveyance are very risky. The slopes are too steep, and the boulders under the surface of the water are too big for safe plying of boats. The Garos usually carry their load from one place to another in baskets placed on their back and hang it from their forehead. It is evident from the topographical condition of the district that moving from place to place is a strenuous task, and people do not usually like to go about to distant places often. When out in their journey in the hills, the Garos, however, do not consider the ups and downs of the hills over which the foot tracks run as so tiring as the people of the plains. I have seen young people as well as people past their middle age going virtually from one end to the other of the district only to meet relatives for a day or two. The journey to and from may cover ten to twelve days, if not more. The district being next to Cherapunji which claims the greatest rainfall in India, has naturally a very high degree of rainfall throughout the year, particularly between April and August. The foot tracks on the hills during rains become very slippery and difficult to tread. To add to this trouble the forest undergrowths and weeds of various kinds gain luxurious growth during rains and practically cover up the entire area of foot tracks. Different types of pests also appear with the rains. Insects of various kinds and leeches are abundant in the area throughout the rainy season. It is a painful experience to live in the hills during the rains for one who is not habituated with the condition of the land. I had difficulties in pursuading the plains people to accompany me to the hills during the rainy season. Malarial fever in epidemic form appears during the rains and continues up to the autumn. Digestive and other intestinal troubles also are very common amongst the people living in the hills, particularly during this season. In one word, the Garos maintain a miserable existence in the hills during the rainy season. Fortunately, they have not to do much of outdoor work during this season excepting weeding their fields where necessary.

Timbers of various kinds are available in the Garo Hills. *Agar* tree from the extract of which *aguru* scent is prepared is also found in the hills. Other timbers are mainly *sal, gambhar, ashoi, champa, rangi, sholua,* etc. Bamboos of different varieties are available in abundance in this district. Canes of a few varieties are also available. A particular variety of cane, locally known as *rema,*sometimes measures hundred yards or more. The maximum girth of a bamboo I came across in the hills was about 2′ 4″.

Dug-out boat

A steep climbing



Rojing—the author's guide

The district is fairly rich in minerals. There is a good amount of coal deposit. Presence of petroleum has been suggested by the experts. Besides these, mica and lime stone, particularly the latter, in sufficient quantity may be had from Garo Hills. Of late, attempt is being made by interested persons to manufacture cement in the border of the Garo Hills. Prospect of manufacturing paper pulp from bamboo and other kinds of fibrous grass is fairly good.

There are varieties of reptiles in the hills although not very numerous. Python and other varieties of snake as also lizards can be seen in the hills. There are varieties of tasteful fish in plenty in the rivers and streamlets. Worthy to mention among them are *masheer, lacho, bacha, tarja, shilun, chital,* etc., as they are known in Bengal. These are only a few of the various varieties.

The climate of the district is fairly hot during the summer and is pretty cold during the winter. It should be mentioned that the actual summer days are very few throughout the year. After one or two consecutive hot days there is always a shower which brings down the temperature considerably. The climate is mostly moist and is never sultry except for a few days in the month of March when most of the undergrowths dry out. Health during the winter is good but during the rains, as I have already mentioned, various diseases break out.

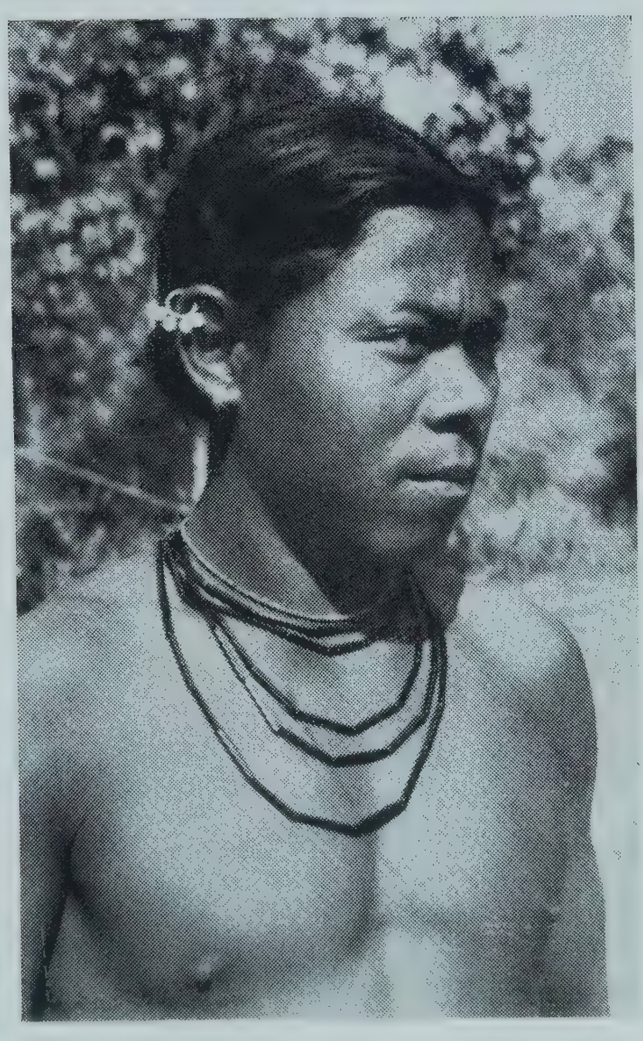
Of the various kinds of birds hornbills, peacocks, peacock pheasants, black pheasants, partridges, wild fowls, green pigeons, doves, etc., are available. Apart from the singing birds like *maina, vringaraj, doel, shyama,* a few other varieties of whistling birds can be found there. Beautiful birds of gay colour can be seen during the autumn and spring. There are also some varieties of beautiful butterflies of attractive colour particularly available in higher altitudes. Various types of fern are available in the hills near the watery sides or shady slopes of the hills from where water trickles out. Besides the seasonal flowers of big trees, there are a number of other kinds of flowers in the forest. In my opinion, however, Garo Hills is not very rich so far as flowers are concerned. I had occasion, however, to come across a few varieties of very good-looking flowers and one very sweet scented orchid having small white flowers with waxy petals.

Fruits of local origin are practically non-existent excepting only a few wild varieties in the hills. But the soil being very fertile and because of the advantage of altitudes varying considerably from one hillock to another, many varieties of fruits have been profitably cultivated by the local people. Of these, pineapple of

very good size and taste is now being produced in sufficient quantity on the slopes of the hills. Orange and citrus fruits also have good yield. Plantain and jack fruits are also grown with good results. Quality of mango fruit is not good. Of the vegetables, particular variety of gourd, pumpkin, a local variety of potato and also sweet potato are cultivated by the Garos. A local variety of plant, called *thabalchu,* is also cultivated by them. The matured root of the plant is usually eaten raw. When peeled off, it appears milky white and yields a milky juice slightly sweet to taste, and the body substance is also soft to bite. The Garos like the taste of it and some times live on it when scarcity of rice occurs. Closer contact with the plains people is becoming more frequent, as a result of which people of some villages have started growing cabbage, cauliflower, knol-khol and beet roots in small quantity. There are two varieties of arum, one of them resembles, to some extent, what is known as the "Santragachhi Ol" (arum) commonly found in Calcutta, but the Garo Hills variety is white in colour, and it becomes very soft and smooth when cooked. Varieties of sweets can be prepared from it, besides it can be used in curry and as a simple boiled food.

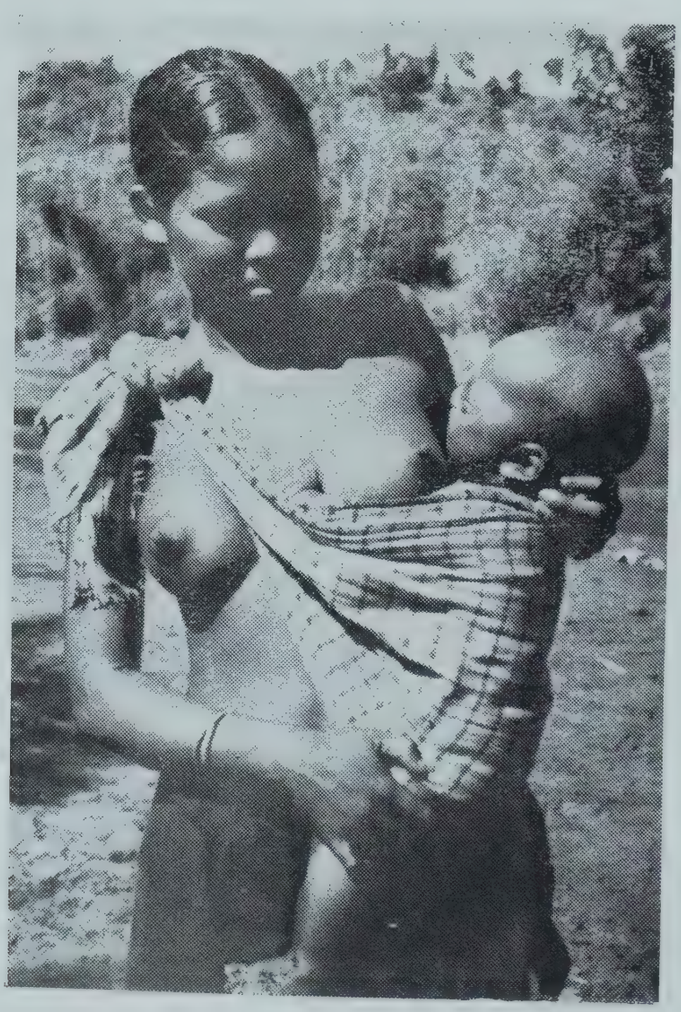
The physical features of the Garos indicate their Mongolian origin. They are of medium height with small eyes, high cheek bones, scanty moustaches and beards and are dark brown in complexion. In childhood, their appearance is extremely dull having a disproportionate growth of the abdomen together with the disproportionate limbs which present on the whole a sickly appearance. The child mortality rate is very high amongst them. As the child grows and attains adolescence, gradual change in the feature takes place and at the age of about 16 years practically no reminiscence of the juvenile physical characteristics can be traced. By that time they develop a fairly mascular body with well shaped heap and abdomen, brawny hands, mascular thighs and calf muscles all of which present a picture of strength and ability for hard work. Even in their old age, traces of their strong mascular development during youth are fairly noticeable. In the case of the women, however, the situation is distinctly different. The girls in their early part of the life have almost the same features as the younger boys. At the age of seven to eight years, their features change, and the bloom of youth appears at the age of ten to twelve years, when their physical structure indicates considerable changes. They also grow up into sturdy young women at the age of fifteen or sixteen and are able to undergo fair amount of hardship with all the features indicating their ability to stand the strain of hard work. But the advent of old age is very quick in their case, and their charm begins to fade away very early. Usually, at the age of forty

Modernised youths



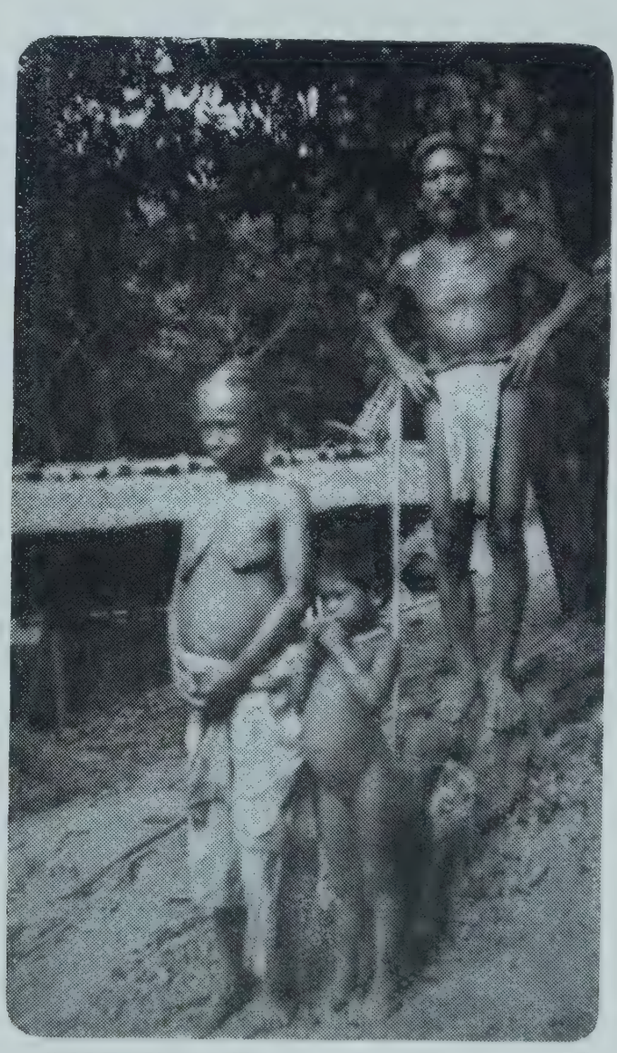
A Garo youth

A Garo woman

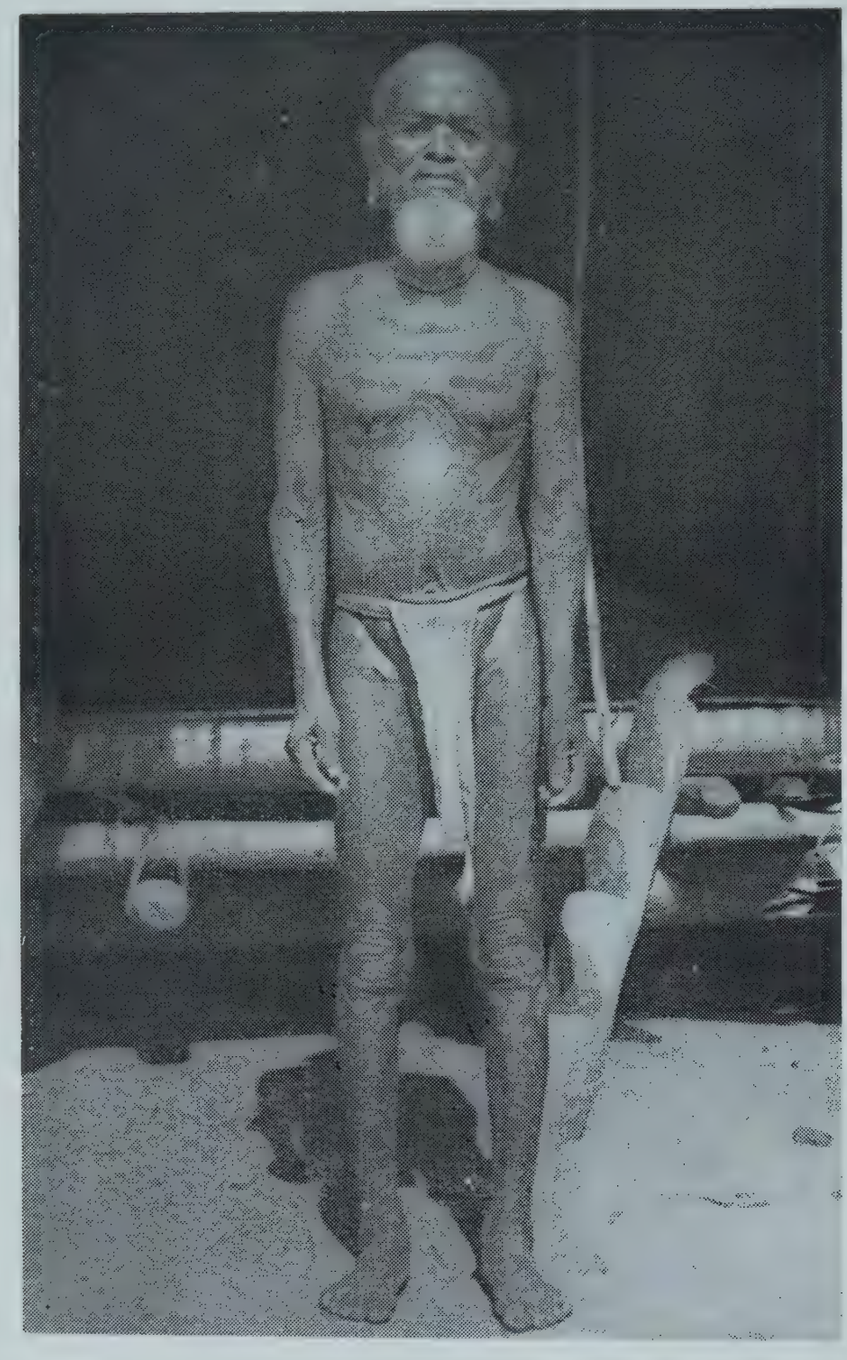


Breast feeding

An old woman



A Garo family



A centenarian

or much earlier, after they have given birth to two or three children, their body contours loose their former shape and muscles become flaccid. The breasts appear dry and hanging, and their facial expression also indicates old age. It is difficult to say how much under-nourishment and the effect, if any, of child bearing are responsible for this particular physical transformation.

The Garos have certain close similarities with their neighbours on the eastern side, namely in the Khasi and Jayantia Hills. In the same hills, excepting the Khasis, there are four more tribes who are distinctly different from the Khasis. They are known as the Synteng or Pnar, the War, the Bhoi and the Lynngam. Of these four, the first and the last ones also are matriarchal tribes. It is necessary to mention that excepting some very general anthropological data collected about them by Lt. Col. P. R. T. Gurdon in his monograph on the Khasis and very scanty information which could be gathered from the Assam Gazetteer and also from a few other reports, viz., 'Descriptive Ethnology of Bengal' by Col. E. T. Dalton, 'Human Sacrifice in Assam' by E. A. Gait, 'Account of the North Eastern Frontier' by Sir Alexander Mackenzie, and certain other short remarks by other workers, nothing in detail can be known about the tribes. From these records it is hardly possible to understand the psychological make up of these tribes. Their similarity in respect of the art of house building and their law of inheritance as also the belief in the malevolent spirit as the cause of disease and other evils befalling them, is worth mentioning. I shall also mention other similarities of the Garo tribe with the matriarchal tribes in the neighbouring hills as well as their difference from the latter.

Col. Dalton, in his 'Descriptive Ethnology of Bengal', mentions about the Garos as one of "the Mechkachari or the Bodo nations". From the linguistic aspects, the Garos have been classed with the Bodo Group also by other writers. Mr. Buchanan says that two-fifths of the Garos are Nokols, i.e., slaves, and the rest are Nokoba, i.e., free men. He also mentions that a Nokoba must not marry a Nokol woman or keep her as a concubine. According to him, the slaves are well fed and well cared for and usually are the best looking people in the village. Col. Dalton also mentions about Malawa and Bemalawa to signify the dependent and the independent Garos, but these names given by the Bengalees are similar to the names given by them to the Boris and Abors of the Upper Assam. It is curious that no trace of such slavery or of such distinctive division as of independent and dependent people can be found in the Garo society at the present day. It is true that in their religious conception some of the Garos mentioned

about certain spirits who had their Nokols always going with them but these Nokols or the Malawa are nothing but servants and orderlies of the Deities. The conception of slavery cannot be traced in the Garo religion or in any other Garo traits now. I have mentioned in connection with the Garo conception of after-death sacrifices, etc., that those who enter the *mimang* land alone without an animal are considered poor, and they are to live separately from the well-to-do group and are to serve them in the mimang (spirit) world. Here as well the idea is that of a servant and not of slave in the strict sense of the term. In this and in many other respects I have reasons to differ from the opinion noted by the foregoing foreigners. Dalton says that the Garo is the name given to this particular tribe by the Hindus and that the Garos call themselves either *nunyas, lyntea* or *abengya*. He also says that each of these groups has dependent and independent branches. From the above mentioned names alone it could be read that these names were given by more cultured plains men living in the borders of the hills. For the word 'nunya' is often heard amongst the plains people of Mymensingh boardering the Garo Hills to signify the less cultured low class Biharies who are usually very unclean in their habits and eat almost anything they can get. 'Lyntea' is very similar to the Bengalee word 'Lengta' which means naked, and lastly 'abengya' may have come from similar Bengalee word 'Benga' which means dullards, or it is also very likely that abengya is a deformed name of the Abeng group of Garos, given by those who do not understand the language. From these and from my personal experience with the Garos, I believe that all these are names given to this tribe by plains people residing on all the three sides of the Garo Hills district. The Garos call themselves Hachiks or the hill-people. This is more likely and more correct in my opinion. About eighty years ago these foreigners undertook to record the data about the tribes of Assam. Garo Hill was then more inaccessible, and I have reasons to believe that these pioneer workers could not traverse the area to enable them to record facts about the people from personal observation and contact in a more thorough going manner. In this respect Major Playfair's monograph 'The Garos' is of better value, although I noticed discrepancies in his work as well. Dalton's remark that the Garos claim alliance with none but the 'Buts' and the English people is to say the least absurd and absolutely incorrect. He must have been misled by some of his employees who possibly mentioned this to please his master. During my field work amongst the Garos covering over ten years I had opportunity of visiting most of the villages in the district, where I never met with a single Garo claiming any affinity with either the 'But' or the English people. The proposition in itself is absurd because

of the fact that a Garo possibly never saw an Englishman before the later half of the 19th century. If any idea, therefore, ever came to their mind about their own alliance with the English people, it must have come to only a few of them in the later half of the last century. Regarding their alliance with the 'Buts' I believe that Dalton has confused the whole issue. 'But' is a Bengalee word for ghost. There is no mention in their folktales, song and mythologies about such alliance with the ghost. It is true that the Garos believe that in the earlier days they had closer communication with the Mette, i.e., the spirits whom they now worship and offer sacrifices to. For any reason whatsoever a Matte should not be confused with a ghost according to the Garo conception.

The Village

There are different sizes of village in the Garo Hills. I have seen small villages consisting of two or three huts, practically isolated from all the advantages of a big village. On the other hand, in a big village there may be as many as fifty or more huts. The size of the big village entirely depends on the space that is available for the house building and also the facilities the inhabitants of the village may derive for cultivation and other purposes from the surroundings of the locality. The largest village, I visited, was situated on the slopes of the hills, as is the usual practice, facing long strip of valley, nearly about a mile and a half long and about half a mile broad. It is easily understandable that people living in such villages take to plough and utilise the valley for agricultural purposes. It has, therefore, the advantage of accommodating larger people than it is possible for the village which is situated on the hill slopes and which is to depend primarily on *jhum* cultivation as described hereafter. Usually, an average sized village contains ten to fifteen houses. The economic factor is one of the main guiding principles regarding the expansion of a village. Availability of arrable land or hillocks for jhum cultivation, good drinking water, facilities of conveyance and also facilities of market places are some of the main factors, which the Garos consider before they fix up a place to start a new village. The common practice is to have one house for one family consisting of husband, wife, and children. Occasionally, the old mother or the mother-in-law also stays in the family.

The houses are constructed on piles of bamboo spread on timber platform raised from the ground. The floor height from the ground varies from one foot to ten feet or more. Some villages, in the central region of the district particularly, have higher

raised huts than those near the border. Safety against attacks of wild animals may be one of the reasons for such constructions but another consideration surely is the avoidance of damp. The side walls are made of matted bamboos and the roof of a variety of grass locally known as *hamfang*. The roof slopes down on the two sides almost to the level of the floor. The construction is usually a long one with a small corridor in front. Some huts have a small room in the back portion. This small room is used as a store or a lumber room and also as a privy to be used during night. They usually cut small hole in the floor of this back room for this purpose. Over the pile of bamboos in the floor, they spread matted bamboo cover, which appears like a tiled floor. With a little movement inside the house there is always a rustling sound because of this type of floor. Usually, the length of the house is near about 30 ft. to 50 ft. and its breadth is about 15 ft. to 20 ft. Much longer houses are also to be found in certain villages. They use very big sized timber posts for the foundation. Some houses, however, are built on large stone boulders which serve as the post of the house, and the floor is constructed on the frame resting on a number of such boulders arranged in rows to suit their purposes. The thick grass covering on the roof lasts for three to five years. After that, they replace the hamfang and also the bamboo framing, if necessary. In most houses there is no window, and there is only one entrance in the front and another small opening at the back of the house. A very few houses have side doors and a side platform. The family dwelling houses are known as *nok*. There is another type of house used as bachelors' dormitory known as *nokpanthe*. This nokpanthe is a strongly built house in the village and is usually a very big one. They decorate the front pillars of the nokpanthe with white, red and black colours and sometimes carve out human and animal figures on them. Often they carve snakes, bulls, pigs and some other forms of reptiles on them besides both male and female human figures. They cannot decorate dwelling houses like this. This is strictly prohibited. A nokpanthe has no front wall. The side walls run about half of the length of the construction from the rear end. There is the back wall as usual.

The adult bachelors, as a rule, are to live in this nokpanthe. They stand as guards and watch the village during night only in theory. Any outsider coming into the village, who is not related to any members of the family of the village, is to live in this nokpanthe with the bachelors. No woman can enter the bachelors' house. It is *marang*, i.e., a sin. If they try to do it, they will have to offer worship to pacify the wrath of *Marang* (deity). I shall deal with this Marang custom in detail separately.

I have noticed that the Garos, particularly those living in the interior of the hills, like more to live on the slopes of the hills than in the plains of the valley. There are villages wherefrom they are to travel up and down of the hills for three days or more to go to a market place. It appears that they do not grudge it even though they cross very high hills.

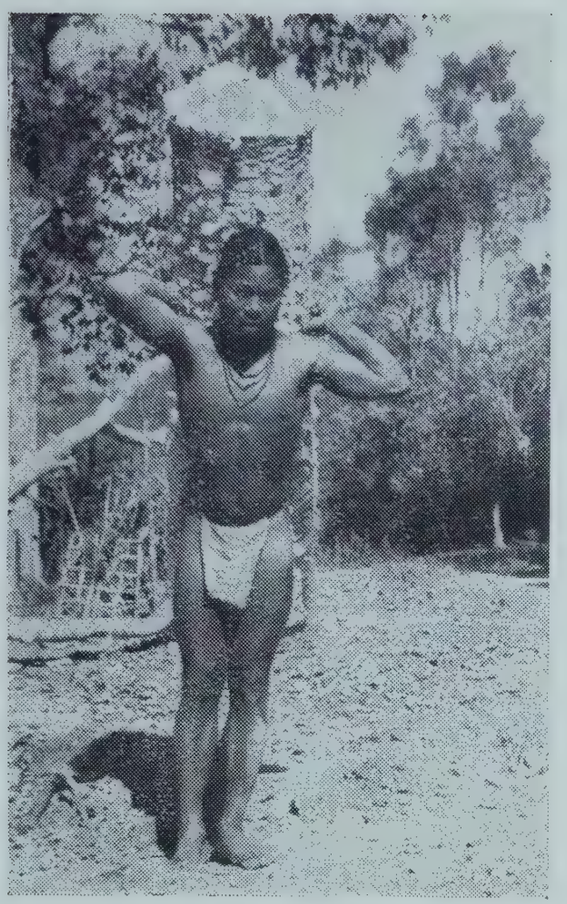
In certain matters, they are very selfish, whereas, they are fairly cooperative in others. Distant villagers usually send a few of their inhabitants to the market place every week or fortnightly to make their purchase and to sell their common products in the market. In case of heavy commodities, the owner himself has to carry them, or he employs other villagers as partners for which they are paid a share of sale proceeds, or they are taken on a daily rate. Where there is the facility of a river they share a boat for the purpose. The boat they use is made of a single piece of dug out wood, the bottom is made into a flat surface and the sides are arc shaped. The boats are of different size. A small one can carry only a single person while the carrying capacity of bigger ones may well be three hundred maunds or more. In recent years, I have seen only a few cases where chisel and other heavier implements are used by them. Near about the district border I saw other tools of carpenters being sometimes used by the Garos.

Economy

Generally speaking, the Garos are poor. They are mainly to live on the food they produce by cultivation. I have elsewhere mentioned the type of their agricultural activities in the hill slopes. This shifting cultivation, or the jhum cultivation, as it is known, has one great difficulty. The main point is this that because of the absence of irrigation and proper manuring of the soil they cannot cultivate the same land for more than two years in succession. Preferably they cultivate the land once only for paddy or some other types of cereals which are locally produced. Together with that they sometimes cultivate arum and a particular variety of edible root called thabalchu resembling tapioca, which is allowed to stand in the field for the next year. The result of this jhum cultivation is that the most of hillocks near a village are deforested, and the timbers and other big trees are cut off. Because of the excessive growth of shrubs and weeds as well as other forest vegetations the once cultivated field does not become altogether barren after one year. If the soil of a particular place be good, they may come back for another cultivation after two or three years' rest. Excepting gourd, chillies, arum and a small quantity of thabalchu the Garos of the interior region have nothing much to

sell in the market besides the forest products like timber, bamboo, etc. These also they are to carry physically to the market or with the help of boats and bamboo or timber rafts where watery channels are available. Where these transports are not available, timbers and other heavy forest products cannot be easily carried to the market. The difficulty in getting cash money in hand is, therefore, understandable. In the western portion of the hills, the economic condition of some of the Garos is fairly good. Besides the agricultural produce already mentioned, the soil is good for short staple cotton which they cultivate in fairly large areas. The Garo Hill cotton has a ready market. There are agents in the markets bordering the district. They purchase the total produce brought to them. This brings some cash money in their hands to enable them to purchase things of their choice in exchange. Occasionally, barter system is also adopted by the Garos. Some of them exchange chillies for rice or some such things of their daily necessity. Chilly is another agricultural produce which they grow in sufficient quantity. With this very limited source of income the Garos cannot afford to provide good clothings or a better standard of food. Most of them are to supplement their income from forest produces. There are some Laskars (judicial Garo officers) and a few Nokmas (village headmen) who are known to be very rich. Now-a-days, in certain parts, the Garos have taken to plough, specially in the valleys between the two hillocks. Plough cultivation has been adopted more extensively in the Simsang (river) valley. Besides paddy, they also grow mustard seeds in fairly large quantity, particularly in the south-eastern zone. Another factor which adds to their economic difficulty is the amount of rice that is consumed for the production of liquor prepared from fermented boiled rice. About 50% of their annual output of rice go for this purpose. They will not hesitate to keep less paddy for their food and spare more for the production of liquor. Many of them are in the habit of taking small quantity of liquor, or *chu* as they call it, every night. Their extravagance in this respect is clearly marked during the festivals when chu forms the main item. I have seen families who spend almost the whole of their paddy stock for the preparation of chu and depend on rice purchased from others to meet their daily food failing which they would rather live on thabalchu or other roots and vegetables than give up chu. This, however, is not the case with all of them.

They have very little implements and have almost no costly utensils for their daily use. Their dress, as I have already described elsewhere, is very simple and is fairly cheap excepting the neck chains which are sometimes costly. Very few people use any metal dish or metal pot for their daily use. Usually, rice and



Carrying cotton

Carrying fuel

Carrying busket

Bamboo rafting

Musical instrument and axe

curry are cooked in earthen pots. Iron fry pans are new things coming into use gradually. Generally, a piece of bamboo strip serves as their spoon for serving and cooking purposes. Food is served on plantain leaves, and they drink water or liquor from *fong* which is made of a particular variety of gourd grown locally having a narrow neck and broad bottom. The outer shell of the gourd is kept in tact, and the inner contents are cleared out through a hole cut near the top of the narrow neck. The gourd shell is then fully dried and used as water or chu bowl.

Implements which are mainly used by the Garos are very few in number. *Mongreng* is a variety of axe, and *banuk* or *oaiseng* is another variety. Besides these, they have spears with very big iron heads. They also have *mellam*, i.e., a short sword, about three feet long. It is made of iron and is straight in shape with sharpened end on both sides. It has a horizontal narrow crossbar from two ends of which they usually tie the taft tail hair of bulls or of yak if they can manage to purchase it from upper districts of Assam. Yaks' tail is very much in demand by the Garos, and they consider it as a precious possession. The lowermost portion of the sword serves as the grip which is pointed at the end. This, they say, helps them to stick the sword on the ground when necessary.

The only article of metal, other than the implements already mentioned, which may be found in every nok (house) is the metal gong known as the *rang*. This is another covetable possession which they highly value. It's use as a musical instrument and other uses on ceremonial occasions, particularly in connection with death, will be mentioned later.

CHAPTER II

Administration

For administrative purposes, the area being a backward tract, inhabited by the Garo tribe who are primitive in their culture, the district of Garo Hills has been grouped under the partially excluded areas of Assam. The Governor of Assam has special power over the administrative machinery of the district. The local administration of the Garo Hills is entrusted to a Deputy Commissioner whose headquarters is at Tura. The Deputy Commissioner is the judicial and executive head of the district. The Divisional Forest Officer of the Garo Hills looks after the reserve forest and forest produces of the district. The reserve forest areas and plantations, i.e., aforestation work in general, as also the preservation of forest are looked after by this officer. Under the Deputy Commissioner, there are Assistant Deputy Commissioners to help him in his various functions. The whole of the district has been divided into a number of small areas known as *elaka* (jurisdiction). There is a *Laskar* over each elaka who has been empowered to decide minor judicial matters to try cases locally and also to collect revenues from the villagers. Some minor executive functions have also been delegated to the Laskar. He gets a sort of commission over the realised revenue and fines collected within his jurisdiction. A Laskar has a few *Sardars* under him who serve as his peons and sometimes as his assistants to help him in his work. A Laskar in certain cases may ask a Sardar to go to a village to conduct a trial where it may not be possible for him to attend personally. In matters of greater importance, however, a Laskar decides the case personally. There are usually two kinds of Nokmas: (a) the village headman called Songni Nokma and (b) Akhing Nokma, i.e., the Landlord. The Songni Nokma has jurisdiction only over the village he lives in, and any trouble arising in the village is usually settled by him and is referred to him for necessary redress. If the decision be beyond his jurisdiction, the case is taken up by the Laskar or is sent up to Tura for the Deputy Commissioner's decision. On ceremonial occasions, the Nokma is respected. On such occasions, liquor is first offered to him after it has been offered to the deity connected with the festival or the ceremony. The Akhing Nokma is a nominal head over the area of land and hillocks under him. If anyone desires to settle within his elaka or to cultivate any portion of the land within his jurisdiction, he must have the consent of Akhing Nokma before he can do so; sometimes a sort of small royalty is paid to him, but this is not

compulsory. He can, however, demand a very small portion of the produce of the land on the first occasion. In lieu of this, some sort of forest products, such as bamboo and timber, may be given to him by cultivators within his elaka. He has absolute right to refuse land to anyone without assigning any reason. But this is almost never done. In a few villages, a third kind of Nokma known as Gana Nokma can also be seen. I have given a short description of this Gana Nokma at the end of this chapter. Besides the Deputy Commissioner, the Garos are very much afraid of the Laskar who has the authority to inflict very severe corporal punishment on the culprits and also the right to impose heavy fine. A *Mauzadar* is a tax collector.

The Divisional Forest Officer, on the other hand, has a number of Range Officers under him who are responsible to him for the protection of forest and afforestation within the particular area as also for the collection of taxes from the sale of forest products allotted to them. The whole of the district has been divided into a number of such areas allotted to different Range Officers. There are a few Rangers and guards to assist the Range Officer in his work. This in nut-shell is the administrative structure of the district of Garo Hills.

Under the new constitution of India, very recently a Council consisting of only a few elected members has been formed, which mainly looks after the welfare of the people of the Garo Hills. Certain judicial and executive functions have been transferred to the executive body of this Council.

From the psychological standpoint, there is scope for some sort of conflict inasmuch as the administrative control rests with the males alone, while, on the other hand, the mother has a large share in the family control. This is an apparent anomaly in practice. However, in a patriarchal society, the father has the control over the family in general, but the mother has equally good control over the matters within the family household as in the Garo society. The gubernatorial authorities serve as the father images whereas, mother holds the same authoritative position within the frame work of the family. The maternal uncle, as I have mentioned elsewhere, has a fair voice on the decision over disputes which may arise within a particular family, that is to say the brother has a fair control over the management of the sisters' family. Usually, they do not exercise this right unless they are called upon or appealed to either by the sister or by the niece or nephew. For all practical purposes the husband manages the whole show of the family particularly in connection with the earning. The disburse-

ment of money is to a great extent controlled by the wife. The husband mostly works for her. It is natural under the circumstances to expect that in the unconscious mind of the Garos besides the deities the hostile father's image is represented by the Deputy Commissioner, by the Laskar to some extent, and by the maternal uncle at times, although images of the Nokma and that of the *khamal* (priest) may also appear at times in the similar hostile father's role. In the case of the Garo people, there is a fearful conception about the Nawang who is considered by some to be the Nokma of the Mimang (spirit of the dead) colony. I have discussed about this Nawang conception in connection with the belief regarding the Mimang life after the death and in connection with dreams. These figures appear to be dangerous and as inflictors of punishment. I may mention in this connection that during my tour I collected dreams numbering over five hundred in some of which I was considered as an evil doer. Fortunately, this was not their common impression, for otherwise it would have been impossible for me to carry on the research work amongst them. By nature they are very sensitive and suspicious of the new comers, particularly those who come in to enquire anything about their life. It took me some time to impress upon them that I had no connection with the government administration or with the military recruiting officer. In a few months' time, however, they came to know about me and my work. This was possible because of the intimacy which developed between us and also because of the government help which came from the Deputy Commissioner in the form of a notice to the Laskars of the hills asking them to inform the Nokmas within their elaka to help me during my stay in the hills. I must mention that this was a great help rendered by the government to me.

Gana Nokma

Besides the two kinds of Nokmas, already mentioned, viz., the Songni Nokma and the Akhing Nokma, there is another class of Nokma known as the Gana Nokma. The Gana Nokma has nothing to do either with the village administration or with the land distribution. If a person becomes very rich and he be acclaimed as such by other members of his village, he, with the consent of the village elders, may assume the title of Gana Nokma. To assume this title he has got to perform certain rituals and has got to arrange for a very sumptuous feast to the people of his village as well as to the villagers neighbouring his own. This merry feast festival, in which food and drink are freely served to all who come to attend, continues for about three days and nights. Pigs, fowls, goats, etc., are killed to celebrate the occasion. After offerings are

made to the Dakkaba (deity), the intending candidate wears metal bangles just above his elbow and puts a red turban on the head supplied by his mother or in her absence by his clans men. After the celebration, he becomes the Gana Nokma. A Gana Nokma is respected by the villagers. Usually, a man with some personality, who is also wealthy, is allowed to become a Gana Nokma. Singing and dancing continue day and night during the celebration of the ceremony. Some villagers told me that a Gana Nokma must also wear ear-rings.

The practice of putting rings and bangles in the person of the deceased, as has already been mentioned elsewhere, has some similarity with the wearing of rings, etc., by the Gana Nokma which virtually indicates wealth and richness. If a Mimang (spirit of the dead) enters the Mimang land without rings or a cow or some other animal or a nokol with him, he is considered poor and treated as low in status in the Mimang colony by the rich Mimangs. In the daily life of the Garos, it can be noticed that very poor villagers unless they are gifted with some practical skill which is helpful in their daily life are also looked down upon by the comparatively rich people of the same village. Whereas, if there be a Gana Nokma in the village, he is always respected for his wealth. In very few villages I came across Gana Nokma. It is interesting to note that the concept of the Garos regarding dependence of status on richness and wealth in the Mimang land closely corresponds to their similar concept in the land of the living so far as the status of an individual is concerned.

CHAPTER III

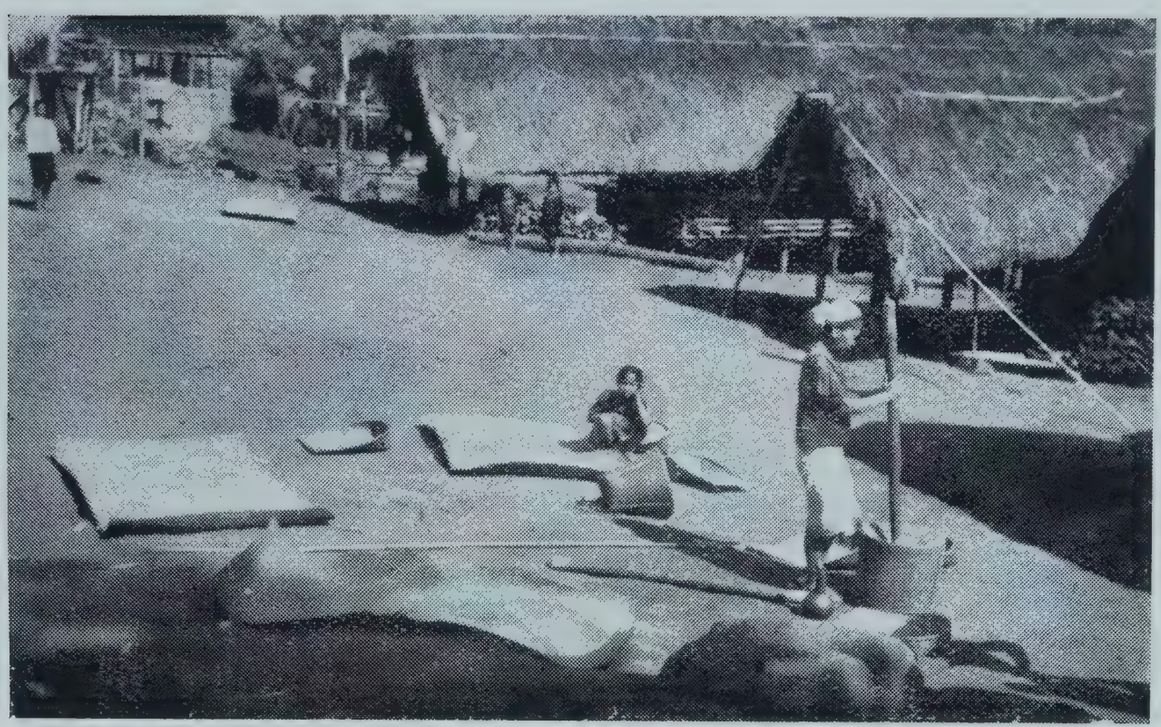
Daily Life

Usually, the day's work begins at 4 a.m. or earlier. The housewife starts cooking before day break so that meal may be ready by dawn. Adult males finish their meals by day break, and as soon as the fog clears a little during the winter season in particular, they start out for the day either for their cultivation or for the forest. They take their mongreng (hand axe) or an ordinary dao (common Indian hand axe) and other necessary articles for their day's work in the basket on their back as described before. They also carry their midday meal, consisting mainly of a small quantity of boiled rice, and a sort of curry prepared mainly from dry fish where available, or some vegetable soup cooked with salt, chilly and soda ash usually without oil or fat. What they usually eat is a small quantity of rice, and a little salt and a few half burnt or baked chillies or half baked small piece of dry fish. Those who have work in the field begin the work individually although they would prefer starting in a group, particularly when there is any apprehension of danger from wild animals on the way. They work practically for the whole day upto about 3 O'clock in the evening. In case, the cultivated land or the forest they work in be far away from their village, they stop their day's work earlier to reach home before sun set. It should be remembered that in the hills, the sun disappears from the view behind the hillocks much earlier than in the plains. In the interior of the hills where the village lies at the foot of the hill, I have noticed twilight creeping in at about 3 O'clock in the afternoon in the winter season. The womenfolk also go out with the meals to work with the male members. Mothers with young babies also go out like others and work equally hard. They carry the baby on their back wrapped in a piece of cloth which is tied with their body one end going over the shoulder and the other going below the arm of the opposite side. The knot is usually placed near about the shoulder. Only the child's head remains outside the bundle so formed. The mother moves about quite freely with the child on her back and does all sort of out-door works like the other women who are not likewise handicapped. The womenfolk also help the malefolk in cultivation, deforestation, collection of fuels, felling of trees and so on.

The common practice amongst the Garos living in the hills is jhum cultivation. They clear the forest on the slopes of a

particular hillock and allow the vegetation to dry on the spot. They carry home only the fuels that could be collected from there. This operation usually takes place in the month of December or in the early part of January. The able bodied persons of the village collectively do this forest clearing for cultivation, and mutually they help one another in this work. This done they apportion the area amongst themselves. After a month or so, when the cut down shrubs and trees on the slopes get completely dried up, they put fire to these articles to burn them so that the hill slope may be cleared and covered with ash to help the yield of crops. It is easy to understand that plough cannot be used on the slopes of such hills. What they usually do is to take a bamboo stick with its one end sharpened in one hand and take the paddy seeds in another. With the sharpened end of the stick, they dig a small hole in the ground and drop two or three seeds of grain in the hole thus made and cover it up with the feet or leave them open. This they continue till the seeds are sown over the whole area. After this, there is nothing much to do in the field, except keeping watch on the weeds which come out very rapidly. They also put seeds of potatoes, arum shoots, thabalchu, rosalli and some other kind of cereals similar to maize seeds. Gourds, pumpkins and other varieties of hill potatoes are also sometimes cultivated by them mostly in the western block. Chilly is produced in abundance. One of the main ingredients of their food is chilly. They always put large quantities of green chillies and also of salt in their curry. With the first shower of the year, the fields gradually become velvety green again. The Garos usually construct a *borang,* i.e., a thatched hut high on a tree in the field where they live till the crops are brought home. Practically, they leave their village and stay in the *hadang* (field) for about three months at a stretch. This they do to watch their field and to protect their cultivation from the wild animals which usually come to feed on the crops of the cultivated land. The harvest is reaped in August or September and brought to the village and stored for future consumption. The difficulty of jhum cultivation is that the cultivators are called upon to change their cropped area every two years, otherwise, owing to the deterioration of the fertility of the soil, the yield of crop becomes meagre. Therefore, they keep the site fallow for three years in succession where shrubs and other plants grow in profusion. In the 4th year again, they may clear the forests of same slope to utilise it for their agricultural purpose. This depends on the original fertility of the soil. If they find alternative fresh soil quite satisfactory, they do not usually revert to the former again soon unless they are compelled for a shortage of cultivable area or for other considerations.

On the other hand, people who remain in the village when others go out, continue to work during the whole day, particularly the womenfolk, sometimes weaving their linen, doing some basket work or fetching water from the stream, cooking meals for those have gone out and sometimes husking paddy and so on. The older people as well as the youngsters who have not much to do, idle away their time by sitting, talking and sometimes sleeping. At times, they take to drinking chu, the country made liquor prepared from boiled rice. When the people return from their day's work, they dip in the river or in the near about streamlet. They finish their meal preferably before sun set and enter their house before dusk. Very rarely, they come out of their house after dusk. The whole village appears to be asleep with the sun set, excepting the nokpanthe, i.e., bachelors' house, wherein the unmarried adult males live. One can hear sporadic monotonous musical notes or a sound of the big *krum,* i.e., big and long drum, played with one monotonous rhythm coming out from this nokpanthe. I have the impression that Garos do not sleep long at a stretch. They wake up after every hour or two, exchange a few words with one another in the house, and then again silence prevails. They sleep and wake up again after some time to repeat the same throughout the night. During the winter, they sleep for sometime and then sit up near the fire place in the house corner and warm themselves up. Want of sufficient clothing may be one of the main reasons for this interrupted sleep during the winter. In the summer and in the rains, mosquitoes and other insects cause interruption of their sleep as they have no mosquito curtains to use. Moreover, there are any number of bed bugs in the bamboo mat floor of their house. They are fairly accustomed to this way of life and seem to have nothing to complain, except their difficulty in getting sufficient food throughout the year. The young boys who cannot go out in the forest usually remain in the village and pass their time mostly either inside their house or walking about within the village area. If there be a sand bed near the village, they usually gather there and play with sands or with small pieces of stones throughout the day. They are very much afraid of going out in the dark. Except those who are a bit modernised, they do not use any lamp or lantern in their house. Most of the villages are without any lamp. Some amongst those, who have been educated in the schools run either by government or by the missionaries, try to get dry battery torches. Many people asked for such a torch from me. They consider it as a valuable treasure. This in short is the picture of the daily life of a Garo.



Husking rice

A granary

Girl smokers

Play And Pastime

Mainly living on hill slopes in the forests of Assam, it is not physically possible for the Garos to take part in any organised group play which is possible for the people living in the plains. I have not come across any tribe, living in the neighbourhood of Garo Hills, who have anything like organised game or organised play of their own. It is doubtful whether any tribal people, particularly those living in the hills, have anything which may be classed under that category. The geographical situation, in case of the Garos, is one of the main hindrances. Above all, their tendencies and their social organisation possibly leave hardly any scope for such a play. With the advent of the christian missionary activities amongst them, the Garos have now learnt to play football. I saw also a modified form of basket ball being played by them. The valley between two hillocks serves as their play ground. It, therefore, could not be very popular amongst those who live in the interior part where such plains are rare. Moreover, the foreign civilization could not have that amount of influence over their traditional ways of life as to make them accept these new forms of play. Usually, the boys reading in the missionary schools and only those young people who have opportunities to come in contact with the district headquarter town, Tura, have witnessed the game of football, basket ball and some other modern games and plays. Most people have not seen any of these games in their life.

In observing a young boy passing his days, one comes across a very common and usual picture of nude boys upto five or six years of age sitting on the ground near their own nok and playing with the pebbles or short pieces of bamboo, throwing it and moving it hither and thither, as if, to kill time somehow. Young grown up boys usually carry a mongreng (hand axe) which they use playfully to cut a piece of wood or bamboo to give it a desired form or frantically in a manner, as if, to test the sharpness of the weapon. At times, it appears they have fanciful tendency to cut things into pieces.

Sometimes young boys catch hold of another and pull him down on the ground like a wrestler. They do not follow any rules in this playful fight nor do they exhibit much of skill or tact therein. It is nothing but a display of physical power and an expression of aggression. The young boys seem to be contended with very little, and they find enjoyment and amusement with almost anything. But the little boys know little of a hearty laughter. To an onlooker it may appear to be a dreary life for the children. The

parents or the elders do not take much care to provide enjoyment for the youngsters. They do not encourage the younger people to be engaged in any sports or play nor do they themselves take part in any games. I have not been able to trace any form of play which may be truly called their own.

If the village be near a river or a fairly big stream, the usual picture is that the younger boys assemble on the bank during any part of the day and enjoy free bath for several hours at a stretch. Almost all of them are good swimmers. Many of them can dive deep into the water. My impression is that those children who live near the river banks are more jolly and sprightly and naturally have more opportunities to pass their time enjoying the river in various ways.

They also use the sand beds as their play spots. On sand beds, the common sight is that boys and girls dig holes deep enough to cause the under surface water to trickle in. They then run about the watery edge of the sand bed of the river to catch hold of tiny fries to put them into the pool made by them. In another form of their play, they collect sands in the shape of hillocks and place twigs and small pebbles on them possibly to symbolise heroes. On many occasions, I observed that after the sand hillock was built, they made holes near the base of it in the form of caves. After sometime, they jump on this hillock and demolish the whole thing only to build again another sometime later.

The more elderly ones usually busy themselves in making useful things. When they have nothing to do, they simply sit idle and smoke *hookka,* a kind of cocoanut shell vessel with wooden pipe fixed on it, used largely in India for smoking tobacco, to pass the time. Amongst themselves, they talk very little and that also when necessity arises. During the cultivation season, they are very busy throughout the day. After returning home before the sun set, they usually keep indoors and sit around the fire place during the winter or sit in the corner of the house when there is nothing to do. From their ways of passing the leisure hours, one might think that the time hangs very heavily on them. They also suffer from the necessary ennui. A mongreng or a dao is their close companion. They try to do something with it whenever an opportunity comes. Either to work or to idle away their spare time is their main characteristic.

Very few of them are attracted to *shikar,* although in the interior of the hills, there are plenty of games for a *shikari* in the neighbourhood of almost every village. Games are rare around the

villages situated near the border of the district. I have seen keen shikaris amongst the Garos who are not only very accurate in their shot but also very good trackers. They know the general behaviour of the animals so thoroughly and have such a precise knowledge about the behaviour of a particular animal living in the neighbourhood of his village that they can predict with a fair amount of certainty its whereabouts and its tendency. These qualities help such shikaris to bag good games with credit. Unfortunately, they do not observe the game rules which are usually prescribed, by the government, for the area which a true sportsman should strictly follow. A Garo shikari would not hesitate to kill any animal, male or female, which he may come across. Most of them are extremely afraid of tiger and wild elephant. I have known only a very few of such shikaris who go forward to chase wild elephants and have the courage to skilfully tract a tiger. Usually, these shikaris use single barrel muzzle loader guns. For killing tigers, they devise an automatic bow firing system with the gun and place it carefully camouflaged in the track of the animal. As soon as the animal steps on the device, the gun goes off and hits the tiger. This is usually arranged near a kill. This requires very skilful knowledge, and a fair idea as to the nature and size of the animal for which the trap is laid. Usually, they kill tigers by this method, and in few cases they shoot at the tiger straight with their guns. The Garos are habitually afraid of the wild animals such as tigers, elephants, bears, etc., when they go out in the forest either for the purpose of cultivation or for collecting fuels and timbers.

Bows and arrows are not used by them now. They say they used them formerly. In folktales, mention of bows and arrows is found. Spear is very rarely used for killing animals. They are rather used for self protection. Very few people have guns. Others remain satisfied with spear, mongreng, banuk, dao (all three are different forms of axe), etc., for their self protection and also for occasional huntings. Those who live near a river or a stream pass many hours of the day and at times of night as well in fishing. They use various methods in catching fish. For the purpose of this paper, it is not necessary to describe them here.

Character and Belief

By nature the Garos are suspicious of the new comers who are not Garos. Particularly anyone asking about their customs and traditions or one who enquires about anything personal rouses their suspicion to such an extent that I had to come away with a complete failure from some of the villages, I visited on the first occasion of my tour in the hills. To add to this difficulty the situation became

worse with the out break of the second World War. Efforts were then being made by the government to recruit able bodied Garos for the labour corps. This made most of the people suspicious who were more contented with their modes of life. They became very shy and exaggeratedly suspicious of my purpose, and there were several occasions when they did not like my stay in their village. On two occasions, I was not allowed by the Nokmas of the two villages to live within the village area although I reached the place after dusk. That created a very difficult situation for me and for my porters who were new to those areas, did not know any place near about which might be suitable for camping. All my requests and endeavours to explain the purpose of my visit and also to win the Nokma over to my side met with absolute failure. On an other occasion, however, the first refusal was later on withdrawn by the Nokma who subsequently became very friendly and helpful to me. They also believe that visit by any gentleman from the plains may portend evil to the villagers. The dream of a well-dressed civilized person of the plains coming to their village either by boat or on foot is interpreted as an indication of evil, and they apprehend that some disease in epidemic form would break out in the village. They consider this image of civilised gentleman in dream as the image of Dakkaba, one of the chief deities. This Dakkaba, when displeased, causes pernicious type of diseases like cholera, pox, etc. They offer sacrifices and perform necessary ceremonies to appease the wrath of the Dakkaba if any one has such a dream.

To one who is not accustomed with their manners and customs the first impression of meeting a Garo is invariably not very pleasing. At the first sight, they appear to be not only suspicious but also very reserve and exclusive. After a short stay with them, when one gets accustomed with their ways, particularly when one learns their language and can speak a few words to them on the first meeting, the situation becomes easy, and they usually become very friendly and helpful. My general impression about their character is that, generally speaking, they are good natured, amiable, fairly hard working and very frank and straight forward in their dealings. If one is not frank with them and is found to be designing, they become at once very curt and try to shun his company and refrain from offering any help which otherwise they would offer very gladly and genuinely. In most of the villages, I found them to be hospitable. Wherever I pitched my tent near a village, men, women and children came in number and sat round me and talked till late in the night. Very simple joke excites hearty laughter in them. Their character has undergone a remarkable change within the last seventy-five years. In the latter

half of the 19th century, the British Government tried to establish their control over the area. They had to suffer defeat on two or three occasions in the hands of the Garos although the latter were not so well equipped as the British soldiers. The tact and skill of the Garo inflicted a heavy loss on the British army which despatched a military expedition to bring the area under control. I have myself visited three such places where the Garo told me, the British military force was completely beaten. Ultimately, they were brought under control, and then the government established an administrative headquarters at Tura and appointed a Deputy Commissioner to carry on the administration of the district. Till that time, the Garos were a head hunting tribe. In the records of the district, it is mentioned that from one village alone more than two hundred human skulls were recovered. It was the custom amongst the Garos to preserve the head of the man killed by them as a trophy. More the number of skulls gathered by an individual more honoured was his place in the society. It was considered as an act of valour and won respect and prestige from the members of the society. They not only carried on organised raids on the villages in the neighbouring districts, i.e., the villages in the districts of Mymensingh, now in East Pakistan, and Goalpara in Assam to collect the human heads but also carried on such raids on enemy villages within the districts of Garo Hills. I have mentioned in connection with the death ceremony that they used to consider it necessary to kill a human being on the occasion of the cremation of the dead body. For this purpose, they used to organise raids on the villages in the plains or on an enemy village in the hills to catch hold of a man who may be brought for the purpose of sacrifice, to be performed, near the funeral pyre. The Mimang (spirit of the dead) of this sacrificed man becomes a *nokol,* i.e., a servant of the Mimang of the dead person and accompanies the latter to the Mimang land at Balpakram. If a Mimang goes there without a nokol or a cow or some good presents, he is to live there as a nokol of the Mimangs who are well off there.

They believe in three different kinds of spirits :

1 Bhut, or Deo, i.e., a Ghost.

2 Mimang, i.e., the spirit of the dead.

3 Metti or mette, i.e., the spirit which they usually worship.

The spirits are usually malevolent ones. They have no conception of any purely benevolent Mette. On my enquiry, they replied, "Why should we care and bother for the Mette who does not cause any harm or evil to us ?" Their conception is that Mette catches hold of and bites a person who becomes its victim and

suffers from some disease or is subjected to some inconvenience. Their usual expression for this is Mettichikka which literally means 'Metti has bitten'. When some offerings are made to him, the Metti leaves the person and the disease is cured.

Although, the Garos for several generations have been living in the dense forest of the Garo Hills, they have nevertheless some contact with the surrounding civilised people. In spite of this, they have been able to preserve tribal characteristics to a very great extent. Their shyness about everything new together with a keen inquisitiveness about the new objects are prominent features of their character. At the first sight, it may appear to be rather strange that the people who live in the forest are afraid of moving from place to place through the forest following foot track connecting one village with the other. Particularly, they are very much afraid to go out of their nok (house) at night. Usually, they try by all means to come back to their nok perferably before dusk. I found it difficult to make them open their doors after nightfall if circumstances compelled me to reach such a village late for my night stay. Koncking at the door, asking for shelter and requesting them repeatedly to open the door sometime met with straight refusal from their side. They remained absolutely silent within the nok not replying or responding to any question or request made to them. There is of course another type of people who are by nature helpful. Situation in the nokpanthe (bachelors' dormitory) is totally different. A visitor may have access to the bachelors' dormitory, i.e., a nokpanthe, during any part of the day or night. People living there usually try to accommodate the new comer when they are satisfied that the visitor does not mean any harm or evil to them. I had no difficulty in convincing them of my troubles possibly because of the presence of my Garo porters. They are, as a general rule, very cordial to one of their own tribe be he a relative or a completely unknown person. A Garo visitor to any village is sure to get some food and shelter everywhere in the district. But a Garo stranger to an unknown village usually does not take his food from others unless he happens to be known to one of the villagers. In case of dire necessity, however, they seek such help which is gladly offered to them. I received presents such as husked rice, local variety of gourd and a few varieties of arum and eggs almost from every village where I encamped. Well-to-do people also offered fowls. In villages on the river sides particularly in the Simsang (river) valley, people offered fish, curd or milk. Their hospitality in this sense is praiseworthy. Considering the scarcity of such things in that locality and also taking into consideration their economic condition, these presents are really considerable. If they find you friendly, they will take pains

to help you to a very great extent even at the cost of their own benefit. Some of them are very timid but I met a few who were really courageous. They are fairly painstaking. They usually go in the forest for the day's work in a group. If they are to go alone either for their day's work or to meet a relative in a distant village, they walk very stealthily remaining alert to all sounds and smell coming from different directions. At the slightest suspicious sound they very quickly hide themselves in a bush or secure a safe place near at hand either on a tree or behind a big boulder. They are very expert tree climbers and can get at the top of a tree in a minute. On certain occasion, I found them behaving like a neurotic patient suffering from anxiety symptoms. I may mention in this connection that I have not come across any psychotic patients in the villages of the Garo Hills. On enquiry, I came to learn that such cases are very rare although other types of psychoneurosis may be found.

CHAPTER IV

Social Structure

As in every other society the Garos also have to observe restrictions regarding certain actions and behaviours and certain customs to be followed in their daily life. The human society has a religious or national bearing which actually serves as a bond of union so far as the individuals are concerned. This principle holds equally good in the case of the Garos. Their social structure primarily depends upon the matriarchal form of inheritance where usually the youngest daughter inherits the property from the mother if the parents, particularly the mother, so desires. She may select the youngest or any one of her daughters to be the *nokna,* i.e., the future heiress of her property. If there is more than one daughter in the family, the mother as well as the father gives a portion of their moveable property to the other girls during their marriage and keeps the major portion of their property for the nokna to inherit. The nokna stays in the family even after marriage. The other daughters usually go out of the family and settle elsewhere to establish their family life anew. The wife is practically the owner of all the inherited properties from her mother, and she has absolute authority over its use, care and disposal. The husband only works with her consent regarding the management of the property. Maternal uncle has a voice over the sisters, nephews and nieces in the case of a dispute arising out of the property. He tries to mediate. His opinion is usually respected by the sister and the nieces particularly in matters related to the marriage. Mother's brother has a fair control regarding the selection of the bridegroom. The husband of the nokna is brought to the family to live with the daughter. If he refuses to stay in the house, he has to pay a penalty for his behaviour. As far as it is practicable, the society usually tries to persuade him to go back and live in that family. If, however, he refuses persistently the village elders who assemble in a meeting and pass a decree of divorce so that the nokna is free again to marry a suitable candidate. It is customary for the girls to marry one of her father's sister's sons. It is, therefore, a form of cross cousin marriage that is practised in the Garo society. Under all circumstances, the father's sister's son must be given the first preference as a bridegroom. If both of them disagree to marry, the next selection comes to father's another sister's son and so on. Failing

this arrangement, as a last resort the girl may marry any youngman preferably from the *chachi*, i.e., from the same family group as that of the father's sister.

Marriage

There are different forms of marriage in a Garo society. The main system is to marry a father's sister's son by negotiation. The mother or the father of the girl proposes this marriage either to the boy or to his parents. If they agree, the marriage becomes easy provided the girl gives her consent to her parents beforehand. Parents do not proceed to any negotiation without the clear consent of the girl. If the boy, on the other hand, does not agree to this marriage proposal, and if the girl insists on this marriage, even physical force is applied to the boy to compel him to agree to the proposal. Occasions arise where the boy is brought for marriage by physical force, the extent of which is sometimes extreme. They are punished and roughly handled in all possible ways. I had occasions to see such unfortunate youngmen being pulled by their arms and the body bleeding all over. Marks of injury from beating were evident. This unfortunate youngman pleads, shouts, reasons, and prays to be released but all in vain. His body is tied up, and he is kept in the house of the bride till the marriage. The people of the girl's village stand on guard so that he may not run away from the house before marriage. If the boy can manage to run away from the house that night or the day after or sometimes within three days from the date of marriage, the people of the village again try to search him out and bring him in the same manner as aforesaid and possibly this time the culprit suffers worse. If the boy manages to run away three times consecutively, the village elders meet and decide for divorce.

Another form of marriage is comparatively simple. If the girl offers food to any youngman particularly one of her mother's brother's son who may perchance have come to the village and stayed in the nokpanthe, i.e., the bachelors' dormitory during the night and if the boy eats the food offered to him, the marriage is accepted. If he refuses it, then, of course, it is not a valid marriage but the girl may take the help of her parents to persuade the boy to agree to marry her. In this case, the physical force referred to above may or may not follow.

The third form of marriage is a matter of secret arrangement between the girl and the boy whereby the latter comes to live with the girl in her house at night. The boy has naturally got to

enter stealthily when all others in the house are asleep. The girl in this case makes necessary arrangements and manipulates the whole thing in such a way that the boy may enter the house without being noticed by others. In the morning, if the boy is detected in the house with the girl, the formal marriage proceeds. If the boy, on any ground, lives with the girl in the house during night and runs away in the morning, it is a marange, i.e., sin for which the boy is punished and as in the previous manner he is compelled to marry the girl or pay heavy fine.

There is yet another form of marriage which is the marriage by elopement. The bride and bridegroom secretly plan and escape from their respective house and meet somewhere privately. For a few days, they settle somewhere outside the village. When the parents of both the parties come to know of this and if there is nothing anti-social in their union, the formal marriage takes place.

The actual marriage ceremony is a simple affair. Both the bride and the bridegroom sit on the floor of the bride's house, and the khamal, i.e., the priest, utters some of his exorcism and finally Dodokka i.e., killing-fowls ceremony is performed by killing two fowls, one cock and one hen, by striking them with a wooden rod (usually that of the country hand-balance) on the head, and they are let loose on the floor before they are actually dead. The birds flutter their wings and make restless movements on the floor before they die.

There are some marriage tests which are carefully observed by the khamal and other people, who assemble during the marriage. One of the tests is that if the two birds finally come to rest one near the other this is an indication that the marriage will last long, and it is likely to be happy. If, however, the two birds move away from each other before their death or have their heads on divergent directions, it is a bad omen indicating that the marriage is likely to be followed sooner or later by divorce. It may as well indicate an unhappy marriage. There is another test which is then applied by the khamal who opens the abdomen of the birds and observes the intestines. If the two ends of the entrails when hanged on remain close to each other, it is a good omen while, on the other hand, if the chords turn on divergent direction, the marriage is considered to be bad. If the stomach of the fowls be full with food or the intestine with faeces, it indicates good omen regarding wealth. The villagers and the khamal are all served with liquor prepared by the Garos. If financially well placed, bride's party also serves food to the villagers, and the

merry making may go on for sometime. The bride and the bridegroom are to eat together from the same dish without which the marriage is not valid. The function takes place during any part of the day or in the night. It is only a question of convenience. The marriage may take place during any part of the year.

There are certain rules and guiding principles in regulating the marriage in the Garo society. Among the three main clans, viz., Marak, Sangma and Momin, the Garos usually observe exogamy, i.e., a Marak is not allowed to marry a Marak, and similarly a Sangma cannot marry a Sangma nor a Momin can marry a Momin. Under each of these clans, there are a number of sub-clans or septes. I have elsewhere mentioned the names of the sub-clans under each of these three clans, and if under certain conditions a Marak marries a Marak, he is to pay a fine which is fairly heavy. But in any case the marriage between the members of the same sub-clan under the same clan is not recognised as valid by the Garo society. Although exogamy prevails amongst the different clans the Garos prefer to follow their endogamous tendency with reference to the people of other societies. Marriage with girls of other societies is extremely rare nor does a Garo woman usually take to a man of any other society as her husband. Such a situation almost never arises. People of the neighbouring district, except the tribal peoples of the Khasi and Jayantia Hills are more or less higher in social status and more civilised. The possibility of such cross marriage is fairly absent, except, of course, in the case of love marriage. In the present day, such cases were mentioned to me by some of the villagers. But here for our consideration such instances should be considered as exceptions rather than general rule.

Birth

During the advance stage of pregnancy, the expectant mother refrains from going out for heavy work but does the household duties instead. When the time for delivery comes, the female khamal, if she is available in the village, is called in to help the delivery. No male member is allowed in the house during delivery and for two or three days after it. Sometimes this period is extended to seven or ten days in some villages. Only the married females are allowed to stay in the house during the time of delivery. In some villages, I am told that unmarried young girls are also allowed to stay in the house during labour. The female khamal cuts the naval chord with the help of a bamboo blade and does other necessary formalities. Iron knife is not to be used for this purpose. The main formality is the offering of eggs or a fowl to

Darichik, a deity. According to the belief of the Garos, this evil spirit is always after doing some harm to the foetus in the womb and also immediately after the birth of the child. They believe that this spirit does this only to get some offerings from the relatives of the new born baby. It is satisfied when the offering is given to it. According to some, Darichik is a male spirit while, according to others, it is a female spirit. Many people do not care to know whether this spirit is a male or a female. The offering is simple. The female khamal offers eggs or the fowl brought for the spirit on the floor and in the front of the house together with some liquor. In doing so, the khamal utters certain *mantras* (religious verses) very quickly. It was not possible for me to catch them. The villagers do not know them either. The khamal refused to recite the mantras for me. She could not explain the meaning of the words she uttered. I have come across this difficulty during my field work. On several occasions in connection with particular groups of music, it was clearly and frankly admitted by the Garos that they do not know the meaning of the song nor they can understand the meaning of the words used in the song. According to them, these songs have come down to them through the ages, the origin of which is not known to them, but they sing these songs with customary rigidity when the suitable occasion arises. It is my experience from contact with them that in particular observances and religious performances the Garos mostly follow the practice as was learnt from their elders. As they have no script of their own and as there was no written scriptures, the khamal has to depend solely and absolutely on his own memory for recitation of the religious mantras and other performances. It follows, therefore, that under such circumstances omissions and commissions are likely to happen frequently. I should further emphasise and say that it is never possible for any one to remember the original verse particularly there where literacy is unknown and where there are so many deities to be worshipped by different methods and different mantras in different regions. My conclusions are based on facts which I could gather from the khamals of different localities. Clear discrepancies were discernible regarding the performances as well as the purposes of the offerings. In some villages on the day of the birth of a child, Darichik and Saljong (deities) are worshipped and offerings are made to them. The people of the house drink liquor to solemnise the occasion. This practically completes the rituals in connection with the birth in the Garo society. The khamal usually gives a name to the child after birth. No other ceremony is observed for the naming.

Death

I have already described the marriage ceremony as prevalent amongst Garos and the other rituals in connection with the Garo life. By them the birth of a child, it appears, is taken more easily and as a matter of course. But death possibly disturbs them more. Rituals and other formal observances, therefore, are more numerous in connection with death than with any other events in life.

Before I mention anything about the rituals connected with the death in the Garo society, I would like to make it clear again that a marked difference is found in the observances connected with death among the different clans. Particularly the Duals living in the plains of Mymensingh observe distinctly different rituals from those living in the interior of the hills. Close contact with the Hindus appears to have exerted considerable influence in effecting changes in the observances in connection with the death as also in many other spheres of their life. Wide divergence in the observed rituals and customs particularly in connection with the death is also noticed amongst the different clans of the Garos living in the Garo Hills. It is not, however, profitable to mention the differences, I noticed, from village to village even among the members of the same clan. I shall only mention the main differences, where necessary.

Prevailing custom is that all the near relatives of the dead must be informed. The dead body cannot be cremated before they assemble. Once in the hills I met a Garo who was going to inform such relatives living a long way off from the village where the death occured. He had to traverse a distance of three days' march to inform them. Here again, this custom also is not very rigidly followed nowadays on all occasions. On receiving such information, the relatives hurry to that village. They usually carry their own rations and sometimes also some quantity of liquor and an ox or a pig or a fowl to contribute for the ceremony to relieve the burden of expenses in this connection. Though it is not a compulsory custom yet this is the common practice among them.

Soon after the death, the dead body is sponged or washed and made to lie on the floor with a rang (a metal gong) under the head to serve as a pillow. The washing of the body is also done with the water in the rang which, after wash, is put near the foot of the dead body. A rang is considered as something very honourable and valuable. Generally the Nokma, i.e., the headman of a village, and other rich people have a number of rangs in their possession. They are usually arranged in a row on both sides of the dead body when it lies in wait for the relatives to come.

A *sansuri,* i.e., a cage-like bamboo structure is built round the *thruma,* i.e., a central post of the nok. This is constructed simply by piling of bamboos on all the four sides of the thruma to cover it upto the height of three to four feet. The base measurement of this cubical structure is about one foot and a half on each side. Some liquor is kept near this sansuri, and food is also given every-day during the meal times. It is their practice to offer some liquor there before anybody drinks in that nok. This sansuri is kept for about one year till the Delangsua ceremony, i.e., the burning of the Mimang's (spirit of the dead) house, is performed. I shall presently narrate this ceremony.

The villagers drink liquor and play on the krum, i.e., a long drum, so long as the dead body is kept in the nok. At least one man must attend the dead body always, and fire is kept burning all through the night. Food and liquor near the dead body are given for the Mimang (spirit of the dead) so long as it remains within the house and later on near the sansuri, as I have already mentioned, till it is burnt with the *delang* (house of the Mimang) during the great annual festival known as Oanna or Wangala or Chuganrenga when the Delangsua is performed.

With the exception of two or three, all the other groups of the Garos carve out a human figure on a log of wood. This is placed in the ground vertically near the left front corner outside the nok of the dead man. An ox is killed here. This effigy is known as *khamma* or *kima.* Usually, they put the dress of the dead man on this khamma and also put a *pagi,* i.e., the head dress, which resembles the *pagri* or the turban used by Indians. The rang and other personal implements, etc., of the dead are also placed near this khamma. This khamma is constructed to commemorate the memory of the dead. It stands there till it is destroyed by weather. They generally place all the useful articles of the deceased near the sansuri, i.e., the cage-like structure around the central post of the house or at times near the cooking place. In earlier days, the dead body used to be kept in the house till all the messengers carrying the death news, and also the relatives came to the village of the dead. Nowadays, they usually keep the dead body for two days and one night and on the second evening take it out either for cremation or burial. The cremation or the burial usually takes place near the house of the dead and never far away from the village. In some villages, the practice is to carry the dead body to the village where the mother of the dead lives and to cremate or bury it there. This practice is now becoming rare. When the body is placed on the pyre villagers carry the rang which serves as the

Khamma female

Khamma male

Delang

pillow of the dead, to the mother's nok to return it to her as she gave him the rang during his marriage. In case, the mother dies before her son, they make over the rang to the near chachi (relatives) of the mother living in the mother's village. After this they come back to the place where the last cremation was performed. If the mother or the father comes with an ox for killing during cremation he or she is offered a rang and a *khadima* or *maramarang* which means a red cloth. An ox is also killed during the cremation particularly when the flame rises high up.

Among the Garos, there is a saying which runs as follows:

"MANDE SIANA MACHUU DENNA"

which in English means, "Bull is to be slaughtered when a human being dies." In fact, the Garos kill a number of bulls in connection with the obituary rituals if the financial position of the family permits. During no other festival or religious rituals do they kill so many bulls as they do in connection with post-mortem rituals. Nowadays, however, possibly due to the financial stringency, many people kill only pigs and fowls. But those who can afford still slaughter bulls on such occasions. The poorer people rest satisfied by offering fowls to the spirits whom they consider it necessary to appease for the safe journey of the Mimang, i.e., the soul to its destination and its blissful existence there. Later on I shall mention the relevant details in this connection.

I am told that they kill bulls, when a male member dies, and sacrifice cows in the case of death of a female member. But this statement was contradicted by others. I had occasions to see for myself the rituals connected with the death during my tour. In all cases I found the bulls being sacrificed but never a cow. They say if a bull is not available, a cow may be killed instead. Also the financial question has got to be considered for the choice of a bull or a cow.

During the burning of the body, they usually collect a piece or two of bones and put them in a covered wooden bowl, called *garengdik*. This also they bury near the nok. This place is known as Khapak.

Delang

Next morning, a bamboo fencing is erected and a small model of nok is built at the site of the cremation, and a canopy is put

on it. Strips of linen are tied on bamboo tops appearing like flag staffs. This miniature model of the nok is known as delang. It is not compulsory to construct a delang. Only those who can afford to spend for Delangsua ceremony (i.e., burning of the delang) may keep it. The relatives of the dead and other villagers continue to drink and mourn the loss of the dead uptil the delang is constructed. From the time of death upto the construction of this delang only the krum or the big drum and *adel*, another variety of drum and *kaal* (horn) are played on throughout the day and night. No other musical instruments are allowed. The next morning, after the delang is constructed, they offer a worship to Saljong deity. In the case of death of a child under two years of age, no such formalities are observed. Its dead body is usually buried rather than cremated. One has option to build a delang and also to observe all the formalities as aforesaid. In the case of death by an accident, such formalities are usually curtailed. When the dead body is not rescued, e.g., in the case of the death by drowning or by mutilation by tigers or other wild animals, they usually make a human figure with straw and burn it just like a dead body. This is done at the place where actually the man was killed. All the moveable articles of the killed are taken out of the house and thrown in the jungle where the straw effigy is burnt. In the case of the death of a child, they believe that the Darichik works such mischief, and this spirit has even the tendency to eat up the life of the child inside the mother's womb. the Mimang, i.e., the soul of the deceased, remains within the boundary of the house until the Delangsua is performed. The more common view is that the spirit leaves the place when a cow is slaughtered for him during the cremation. It is their belief that Mimang goes over to Balpakram, a place where there is a deep gorge in the hills, for its temporary rest till the passage is cleared for the final abode, viz., Chutmang, believed to be the highest peak of the Garo Hills in the eastern part. According to the Geological Survey of India, however, the highest peak is not Chutmang but Nokrek which is very near to the district head-quarter town of Tura.

I have already mentioned the name of festival called Oanna or Chuganrenga. This is the biggest of the annual festivals and is celebrated when rainy crop is reaped and brought home. A day is fixed by the villagers for this festival. If there be no death during the year, i.e., within the period from one such festival to the next, they celebrate Saramsaoa instead of Oanna. Oanna or Chuganrenga is only celebrated when a delang is kept by a villager in connection with a death in the family. This festival takes place during the month of October or November. During

the Oanna celebration, the relatives of the deceased are invited to attend. Those who came to attend this festival usually bring some liquor or rice or a fowl or a pig or an ox for sacrifice. Although it is not a religious custom or a compulsory rule for them to offer any sacrificial present yet these gifts go a long way to meet the huge expenses usually incurred on such occasions. The villagers also help according to their own financial ability. Early in the morning on the fixed day, the front door of the nok in which the man died is opened and kept ajar. Relatives and villagers then go at the back side of the nok and beat a krum (a big drum) and blow the kaal (a horn) as loudly as possible. At the same time, the khamal (priest) addressing the Mimang (spirit of the dead) says, "Your relatives who have gone before you are all living at Balpakram, thou too follow them and live with them." I enquired why the Mimang which lived in the house so long should leave the nok so easily simply at the sound of these instruments. I was told that at the sound of the kaal the Mimang got frightened which considers it as the trumpetting of *mungma,* i.e., an elephant. Being frightened by the sound, it leaves the house and goes to Balpakram for safety. Just then an ox is slaughtered at the Khapak, the place where the bones of the dead were kept buried, in front of the house. They believe that if no bull is given to the Mimang it goes to Balpakram and remains as Rengma, i.e., a servant of other Mimangs. In the Mimang society there, it is their belief, that one who has no animal with him is looked down upon by other Mimangs, and he cannot build there a nok for himself like the other settlers of the Mimang colony. He, therefore, has to serve others to get the shelter there and remains as a poor labourer for good. On the other hand, those who go there with any cattle, are received in a very honourable manner and given the rights to build nok and to live there on equal status with others.

I was told by dependable persons that in former days they used to secure an individual of the same sex and with similar appearance as the deceased to kill him or her so that his or her Mimang may go with the Mimang of the dead to serve him or her at Balpakram. It was not, certainly, easy to get a person for such a purpose. They had, therefore, to play tricks and sometimes had to use force to fulfil their own ends. Failing to bring the man to the village of the dead, they would kill the person where they might meet him or her and bring the head only to the house of the dead. If the person could be brought in the village, they used to observe the following customs.

When the dead body was placed in the *ganchi,* i.e., pyre for

cremation, the man or woman who was brought for killing, was tied with a *mandal* (a kind of tree) post pitched there for the purpose. They would then cut his or her head off near the ganchi so that this man or woman's Mimang might follow the Mimang of the dead to serve him or her as his or her servant. They used to throw the body of the beheaded person in the forest and would bring only the head of the person to the nok of the dead. Here, after *gudutoa,* i.e., boiling it in water, they used to clean and free the skull from flesh and hung the skull at the back of the house. This custom is not in vogue now, and nowadays, they only kill an ox or a cow or a pig instead.

Some of them believe that the Mimang used to live on the Chutmang or Y'mong, the highest peak of the south range but of late it has changed its abode and is now living in the gorge of Balpakram. I have visited Balpakram and Y'mong. My guide showed me near Balpakram a huge piece of stone having a cavity like an open mouth of a pre-historic frog. This, they told me, is the place where the Mimangs halt for the midday meal. Very near this stone there is a big tree and a small streamlet flows by not far from it. The cow, they further asserted, which the Mimang brings with it is tied to that tree, and they showed some scratches on the stem of the tree which they believe to have been the marks caused by the rope with which those cows are tethered to the tree.

I saw the gorge at the end of a big table land. This is about 2,000 ft. deep and about four miles long. The average breadth is about half a mile or more. A strong lashing wind blows there through all hours of day and night. The river Mahadeo rises there. The place is very solemn and awe inspiring. It is really poetic to imagine that thousands of spirits are living there unseen and unheard by the mortals. The place was cold and one might say as death. I was impressed by this spectacle and thought fit not to wound the feelings of the Garos by my sceptical remarks.

Let me go back to the Delangsua ceremony during the Oanna festival which I was describing. When the Mimang of the dead leaves the nok being frightened as aforesaid, the sansuri is broken, and all the articles of the dead are taken near the delang. People assemble there and play on the krum, kaal, and adel. They drink heavily and kill an ox or a pig or a fowl and smear the blood on the delang. They then set fire to the delang. This is known as the Delangsua ceremony. This is the last rite to be performed in connection with the dead. It will be appropriate to say a few words more in connection with the Chunganrenga festival. The

villagers put up a decorated bamboo in front of their nok and further decorate this altar with the leaves of *khambal* or *araroo* trees (local Garo names), etc. This is the altar of the Saljong (the sun god). They sacrifice goats and fowls and smear the blood on the altar and stick some plumes of the fowl to it together with the hair of the goat on the bamboo post.

Another deity known as Nokdam, i.e., the deity of the nok, is also worshipped after that. Usually, the thruma or the central post of the house is covered with a variety of leaves from the tree known as *moyra,* and a fowl is sacrificed before this altar of the Nokdam, and the blood is smeared on it as described before. They cook the meat of the sacrificed animals and separately offer dishes to the two deities specified above. Only those who perform the Delangsua worship these deities. After the Delangsua the festival continues for three days and nights. During this period, they indulge in incessant drinking and merry making when eating, drinking, dancing, singing continue non-stop. This festival is kown as Chunganrenga. Some people also mention it as Wangala or Oanna.

The only difference between the two festivals, Wangala and Sharamsaoa is that in the latter festival cow killing is strictly prohibited, and no musical instrument other than the krum can be played. They eat, drink and dance during the period of three days of this festival not unlike the Oanna.

People find opportunities during these festivals to indulge in unlawful sexual intimacies. Many pick up their marriage partner during this festival and marry them then or thereafter.

If any of the prohibitions of the Sharamsaoa festival is violated by any one, he is compelled to pay *ashi* (a fine) to the villagers. Different groups or even the people of the same group give different name to this festival as I have mentioned above. The main custom followed by them, however, is more or less the same. In details, there are some differences in every observance amongst the people of different localities.

Among the members of the Atong clan, there is some special feature in connection with the ceremonies which are gone through after the death of a person. They put metal rings in the fingers of the dead person and bangles on his arms. A chicken is also tied by means of a thin rope with the toe of the dead person. This chicken is killed and its blood is smeared on the ganchi (pyre) when the dead body is placed on it. The meat of the chicken is

cooked or is sometimes half-burnt in the fire and then offered to Shaljong. The rings and the bangles are given with the dead to ensure his safe journey to the Mimang land. It is said that Nawang (a demon) stands in the way of the Mimang in its journey to Balpakram and unless he is given the rings and bangles he does not allow the Mimang to proceed to the colony. As to the character of the Nawang, there is difference of opinion amongst the Garos. Some of them believe Nawang to be the Nokma or the head of the Mimang colony who is to be paid something as royalty before a new settler is allowed to enter in the colony. This conception is easily comparable to the land tenure system in the neighbouring district of Garo Hills. If anybody wants to take settlement from the landlord a portion of the land in those districts for his own household or agricultural purposes, he has got to pay a lump sum as *salami* or royalty to the landlord before he can get the necessary permission to settle there. The other concept regarding the Nawang is that he is a hostile demon and always tries to put the Mimang into troubles on its journey to Balpakram. The Mimang then throws the rings or the bangles away to divert the Nawang to some other direction. When the Nawang remains busy in gathering the rings and the bangles, the Mimang successfully eludes him and runs towards Balpakram. Major Playfair, once Deputy Commissioner of the Garo Hills, in his only monograph on the Garos also mentions this characteristic of Nawang. The Nawang itself is conceived by the Garos as a mischievous type of spirit who, to extort presents and offerings, always tries to bring about difficulties in their life, particularly in the Mimang life. Some believe that Nawang stands on the main gate of the Mimang colony and allows passage to those new comers only who offer some presents to him. The solar or lunar eclipse is considered by the Garos to be the result of the mischief done by this Nawang who catches hold of (bites) the sun or the moon as the case may be periodically to realise fines or presents from them. This aspect of the Nawang has some similarity with the powers and duties of the actual Nokma or Laskar of a locality. The Nokma or Laskar inflicts punishment on the members of the society within his jurisdiction for any offence and imposes heavy fines on them for violation of social laws. When in difficulties people of a particular locality sometimes run away from the village to avoid such punishment. They are, however, chased, and very vigilant efforts are made to trace them and to bring them back to the village to place them on trial. The conception about the Nawang, however, varies in different villages. Some consider him merely to be a source of authority while others consider him to be malevolent and always busy after some mischief.

I have already mentioned the different opinions about the final

resting place of the Mimangs. Some believe Y-mong or Chutmang to be the final resting place for the Mimangs while others believe Balpakram as their final residence. There are others again who believe that formerly Chutmang was really the place where the Mimangs lived. But the Nokma, i.e., the Nawang, of the place was in their view very exacting and unhelpful. He was also considered to be far from friendly. So the Mimangs changed their abode from Chutmang to Balpakram. The administrative system of the new Nokma is considered to be good. In this connection, it should be mentioned that the whole of the Garo Hills area is divided into several territorial jurisdictions coming under different Akhing Nokma or the holders of the land. Any settler who intends to build his house or cultivate the land of a certain area has got to secure the permission of the Akhing Nokma to do so.

Rebirth

Major Playfair in his book has mentioned that Garos believe in the rebirth of the Mimang and that they believe in the life after death. My findings on these points are virtually just the opposite. Regarding rebirth most of them say, *haija* which means, 'I do not know'. Some of them go further and say that the *jangi,* i.e., the life of the living person becomes Mimang after death. They wonder how can a Mimang again come back to life in the form of jangi in a living person. The common belief is that the life force or the jangi becomes Mimang by the death of the person, and then the Mimang goes to Balpakram to settle there for good as it is the land of the Mimangs. They have no conception of rebirth of the Mimang. I do not know how Major Playfair came to that conclusion. Some sort of cultural contact with the people of the neighbouring districts where the population is mostly Hindu is possible, and the idea of rebirth might have crept in among some Garos if at all due to this contact. The influence of christian missionaries who are propagating the gospel of christianity amongst the Garos, might be another contributory factor in this behalf, in case, some vague theory of rebirth is at all current in the Garo society.

Dress, Ornaments, etc.

Usually, the children upto the age of five or six years do not wear any dress and are completely naked. After that the boys use *gonda* (a sort of 'kaupin'), a strip of linen about four inches or six inches in width just to cover their private parts. This strip of cloth is first fastened round the waist, and then it comes upto the genital organ, and then it is again turned backwards within the thighs the end being fastened on the backside of the heap with the

waist band, i.e., it is worn like a 'T' shaped bandage. The other parts of the body are kept bare. To economise the length of the strip of the linen, they sometimes tie a thin rope round their waist, and from it they suspend the strip of this linen to cover their genital organ. Adults use the same dress. In many cases, pubic hairs are visible from the two sides of this strip of the linen. They do not feel any delicacy on that account. The women, generally, wear a strip of loin cloth about one cubit broad which hangs from the waist down to just above the knees. The upper part of the body is kept bare. With the change of time, however, their dresses are also changed gradually. Nowadays, the young unmarried girls try to cover their breasts with a strip of cloth or use mill-made vests to cover the upper part of the body. After marriage also they usually keep the upper part of the body bare. Formerly, they used to spin and dye their yarn and weave their own cloth. The indigenous dye-stuffs were used for colouring the yarns. They prefer black, red and blue colour in their dress. Horizontal parallel borders of these colours are always used for the loin cloth of the womenfolk. This linen used by the Garo women is known as *rikhing*, and the piece of cloth used by the males is known as gonda. The effect of cultural contact with men of higher civilization and the influence of christian missionaries have been very marked in bringing about the transformation of their dresses. The younger generation, particularly those, who can afford to buy, prefer khaki shorts to gonda although they may keep their upper part of the body bare. The females also use mill-made vests more often black in colour and rarely also a sort of blouses to cover the upper part of their body.

In the interior of the hills, the males and the females with long hair on their head are a common sight. Usually, they shape their hair into a round ball to hang on the neck. The more modern people of course trim their hair like the males of the plains. Both the males and the females wear bell-metal earings. I have seen elderly women wearing a number of fairly heavy metal rings in their ears with the ultimate result that the earlobes are cut into two. According to them, this is very respectable, and the wearing of a number of earings means status in society. They also consider that this practice enhances their beauty. These bell-metal rings are usually purchased from the neighbouring districts. Besides this both males and females in the interior of the hills wear neck chains made of small beads of conch shell and also of glass beads of different colours. Use of such ornaments are gradually disappearing among the males. Tattoo ornamentation of the body is not practised by the Garos living in the interior of the hills. I have seen some of the Duals (a group of Garos) living near the border

of the district of Mymensingh, and also a few others who had joined the World War I using tattoo on their arms. Some of the females had a single tattoo mark on their forehead in between the two eye brows. Some Garo women wear metal bangles and finger rings. I have seen only a few Garos (males) wearing finger rings. Eartops are nowadays worn by some women living near the hill borders. Nokmas wear a white turban on their head. So also the Laskars. But in their cases, it is of red colour particularly on ceremonial occassions. Usually, they also wear white turban. The Gana Nokma wears a red turban and also wears metal bangles just above his elbows. Garo women are fond of neck chains. Those who are educated and are in government service dress themselves in European fashion. They mostly use shorts, shirts, coats, hoses and shoes. Their head dress is an European sholla hat or a felt hat. Full trousers are not much used. Women of their families dress like the Hindu woman in sarees, chemise, blouse, etc.

Sexual Life

To elicit sexual information from the Garos is the most difficult task. The natural shyness of all people, regarding anything connected with sex is well-known. Due to the social inhibition of sexual life, the problem became more difficult in the case of the Garos. Firstly, they would not give any information regarding their sex life, secondly, even if they say something, they would say what is allowed by the society or what is only considered good by the society. Any anti-social information regarding sexual life is extremely difficult to be had from them. In most cases, I found they gave wrong information even when they agreed to tell you something sexual. So I had to pick up a very close intimacy with a few Garos with great efforts. A comparative study and a close examination of their statements have led me to conclude that on the whole the sexual life of the Garos is fairly well disciplined. The lapses of which they are guilty are not very great, if we remember the geography of the land, their ways of life and the immense possibility of sexual freedom.

It will be profitable to trace briefly the sexual development of the Garos from their childhood. Beginning from birth, the child lives with the mother almost constantly till it can walk about. The mother carries it on her back at home, and also when she goes out for outdoor work. At night, the child sleeps with the mother where also its father lives. Under the circumstances, it may be presumed that the child has opportunities to witness the primal scene. Moreover, the particular way in which the child is carried by the mother stimulates the frictional sensation of the body as a

whole and of the genital region in particular. This suggests the possibility of addiction to the habit of masturbation from very early in life. But I have not been able to gather any satisfactory information to corroborate this conclusion. There is no doubt that some have acpuired this habit, but as a general rule this is not to be found in the Garo society. It is more known to the educated Garos than to the uneducated. I have noticed certain types of infantile masturbation among them. But active indulgence in masturbation to derive pleasure of the seminal discharge by some artificial means is rather less common.

Homosexuality in the sense of anal intercourse is not commonly known to them. I have recently come to know that nowadays, the residents of the nokpanthe indulge in homosexuality. The very few instances I came to know about homosexuality were all committed by the educated Garos, and those who have come into contact with the missionaries. The more unsophisticated people among them do not understand the significance of this practice. From the psychological standpoint, it is interesting to note that I have seen homosexual propensity of minor nature and acts which are to be classed under homosexuality. For instance, I have seen person catching hold of the penis of another man in joke. Some workers interested in this subject think that homosexuality amongst the tribal people of Africa was introduced from Europe. They are of opinion that the aboriginals do not practice homosexuality. My knowledge on this point is not sufficient either to substantiate or to refute this statement. From the psycho-analytical standpoint, it may be at once stated that every individual has homosexual wishes. In most cases, this wish takes up a social garb. Even then the nature of the wish is clearly observable. The Garos are no exception to this rule. The nokpanthe life itself is a proof of their homosexual tendency manifested in a social form. Actual anal coition between two inmates of the nokpanthe is very rare. Rubbing one's body against another's, pressing or even handling the private parts can be at times observed. These are definitely homosexual activities in the Freudian sense.

As far as I could gather from them, it appears to me that the Garos became conversant with homosexual activity to any appreciable extent only after the return of the recruits who had left their home to join the labour corps raised during the first World War. They say that the then young boys who joined the army also learnt masturbation and then taught it to the other young people of their village. I am not sure whether these statements are true. Yet we must admit of such possibility. What is more probable is that possibly both masturbation and homosexuality

in one form or another were present in the Garo society from the very beginning. I have noticed activities known as masturbation amongst *buzrigars* (bird) and homosexual activities amongst wild elephants. As a matter of fact, there are instances of a male elephant living with another younger male elephant. Such male elephants do not mix with the herd. The Garos name such a pair as *maljora* or *garia goonda*. The second name, most probably, has been borrowed from the neighbouring people of the plains. Masturbation and homosexual practices in dogs, goats and cows are also observed. I noticed in the Calcutta Zoological Garden a sambur (stag) attempting anal intercourse with a male bison. Instances from similar observations may be multiplied. But for the purpose of this paper that is not necessary.

Before considering the heterosexual life of the Garos, it is necessary to mention about bestiality prevalent among them. I have seen boys aged from four to seven years playing with bitches, as if, performing sexual intercourse. In two or three cases, I noticed the penis of the boy erected which he was pressing near the vagina of the bitch. On one occassion, I found a boy doing the same with a she-goat. They deny bestiality among grown-ups and try to explain away the behaviour of the younger boys as child's play or mere imitation of the behaviour of male animals. They do not attach any sexual value to these activities of the children. But I have heard them cut jokes referring to such behaviour of the boys. I heard them jokingly calling another person Ramkhan. On enquiry, I was told that Ramkhan was the name of a Garo who had sexual intercourse with a sow. In their jokes, they use expressions like *achak mong thua* (slept with a bitch) or *wak mong thua* (slept with a sow), etc.

Although they deny the practice of bestiality the behaviour of the young boys and their reference to Ramkhan, and also their jokes go to prove conclusively their psychic tendency towards it. But even if they practice bestiality they do it under strict privacy. I have not noticed any such behaviour among young girls nor have I heard any story or joke suggesting bestiality amongst women.

The heterosexual life of the Garos normally begins at puberty and mostly after marriage. Usually, a boy is married at sixteen to eighteen years. There is no age restriction between the boy and the girl for the purpose of marriage. Usually, the boy and the girl are of equal age. I have seen many instances where the husband was considerably younger than the wife. It is necessary

to mention here about the Garo custom of marrying the widowed mother-in-law.

I have mentioned that during the festivals when the spirit runs high boys and girls have sexual intimacy if they can find an opportunity to slip out of the village to some hiding place. The married people both male and female also indulge in extra marital sexuality during such occasions. It is necessary to mention that such incidents occur rarely. If detected, the couple is penalised. If unmarried, pressure is brought about to unite the parties by marriage. Marriages of this type take place during or immediately after the festival. Speaking generally about the Garo society, it must be mentioned that free sex is never tolerated by the Garos. Sexual intimacy with the members of the same clan is looked upon as marang, i.e., sin. From their jokes, I gathered that whenever one called another by the name Goshen, there was always a strong resentment. I gathered that Goshen was known to have indulged in sexual intercourse with his daughter. The man is now dead. His name is mentioned here to illustrate the prevalence of incest. In the mythological stories, it is mentioned that one of the deities named Chisik eloped with his younger sister and lived as husband and wife. The incest is clearly seen in these two cases.

The married couple indulge in sexual pleasure as often as they can. Some say they enjoy sexual intercourse every night, while others say if they do it every night they will die. I do not think there is any common practice regarding this point. It is absolutely a personal question. Sexual intercourse is avoided during menstrual periods and for some weaks before and after the child birth.

The common posture for coitus is that the female partner lies on her back and keeps her legs apart. If the coitus takes place in the jungles where lying on the surface of the ground is not convenient they take to standing positions both facing each other or more commonly the male stands behind the female who bends forward a little. Rarely the female partner is made to lie with her face downwards. Sometimes the female partner takes up a crawling posture.

Lovers have their opportunity to meet in the forest when they go out for fuel collection or for cultivation. They do not usually risk such meeting in the village.

The Garos compose love songs and sing them during festivals.

Both boys and girls have freedom in expressing themselves through songs. The bachelors living in the nokpanthe sing *gonda* songs during any part of the day and night. The married women generally do not sing song. They always like the *numels* (the unmarried girls) to sing.

During a festival or even on the occasion of Mette worship when country liquor is freely drunk, males both married and unmarried get hold of women and force them to drink. They thrust the long head of the pot of gourd, which the Garos use for drinking purposes, in the mouth of the female. I have seen women also doing the same. When they get drunk I have seen male persons taking mouthfuls of liquor and then emptying them in the mouths of females by physically opening the mouths of the latter. The females do not resist much being helpless and surrounded by males. Certainly, they offer themselves for such attacks from the males. The Garos say that they feel attracted by the bare breasts of the women but during their sexual intimacies, they do not press the breast because they say the breasts are meant for the child. One of them replied, "What am I to do with the breast, am I a child ?" I doubt this statement. It is my belief that they handle the breast of the women as much as any other people do. If we remember the oedipus tendency of the Garos, as has been mentioned in connection with the matriarchal system, we should consider the possibility of their childlike tendency to handle the breasts of the women. Is it because of their unconscious oedipus tendency that the women keep their breasts bare ? This is a complicated question which I cannot answer here. That oedipus tendency is one of the contributing factors in keeping breasts bare admits of no doubt. It has been mentioned that the breasts of a Garo woman loose their round contour and hang low after she has given birth to two or three children.

CHAPTER V

Mettes or the Deities

It is difficult to understand and to find an English equivalent of what exactly the Garos mean by the word Mette. It should be best understood as a deity having some of the characters of a spirit. I tried to find out whether they have any conception of any form regarding the Mette. Nowhere could I find any idea about their form. Everywhere the common people as well as the khamals (priests) said that the Mette has no form. The very question regarding the form of a Mette appeared to be strange and absurd to them. According to their belief, a Mette cannot have any form because it is a Mette. A few amongst them put me the question, "Is Mette a human being that you ask about its form or is it any animal ? If it is a Mette it cannot resemble any thing like these." But, they believe, that at times a Mette can assume a form to allure a person to take him to a suitable place for the purpose of realising some sort of offering from him by threat of a mischief. The usual Garo expression is Mette Chikka which literally means 'the deity has bit'. A Mette bites a man simply to get some offerings. A misdeed or a foolish action on the part of an individual only affords an opportunity to the mischievious and malevolent Mette to work its evil designs. It is not essential that a man must do some wrong to be punished by the spirits. It may be a chance meeting either in the forest or in a river or in any other place by which a Mette may be passing. On such occasions, if that malevolent spirit considers the moment opportune for it, it bites the individual who then falls a victim to the disease for which a particular Mette is responsible.

There is no particular abode for the Mette to reside. A deep gorge, a steep hill top, a high hillock, a deep river pool or even some difficult river rapids are each considered by the Garos to have a presiding Mette with its residence there. During my tour when I started to climb the highest peak of the Garo Hills known as the Nokrek, I was asked by the guide and the head porter to perform a test to find out whether the Mette would be favourably disposed to us during our journey or any danger would befall us on the way. The test was a very simple one. The guide took an egg and threw it on a stone boulder. The shell of the egg broke into pieces, and the inner contents fell scattered in different directions. The guide then bent down to observe keenly whether the

direction of the track which we were to follow had been crossed by the egg contents. Unfortunately, a little amount of albumin lay crosswise towards the direction of the track. This meant that the Mette, i.e., the supernatural power ruling over that area was not in favour of our going up on the top. The whole party of the Garo porters and the guide refused to climb the hill that day. I did not like to spare my time uselessly. I suggested that the test should be performed by the leader, and I said that I was the leader of the party and not the guide who actually performed the test. After a short discussion amongst them, they accepted my view and asked me to perform the test again. I had observed the manner in which the guide threw the egg on the stone. I threw another egg on the same boulder taking all possible care to throw it in a manner so that the splittings of the egg might spread along our track and not across it. It was a successful attempt. The splittings lay along the direction of the track we were to follow. The guide carefully examining all the other directions gave his consent to climb the hill top. My porters also individually examined the result of the test and agreed with some amount of reluctance to climb the peak. I was then asked to lead the party, the real guide came next to me to guide the direction of our climb from behind. When we reached a considerable height we saw fresh foot prints of a wild elephant, the size of which indicated a full grown male. It was a stray elephant that created great panic amongst my porters. Although we had two guns and two rifles with us, they did their best to prevail upon me to return to camp without advancing further. When I was trying to convince them of the effect of the rifle on an elephant, there was a rustle in the jungle, and the presence of the elephant within fifty yards of our place became evident to all of us. My guide at once interpreted this as indicating that the Mette was angry and that the first test was the valid test and that we should not proceed further. It took me about half an hour to convince them of the validity of my test and that the wild elephant that was moving ahead of us was trying to hide itself from us for its protection and that its presence did not mean any harm to us. Ultimately, I was successful in convincing them of the truth of this statement of mine but I had to agree to their suggestion to take a little circuitous path to avoid the elephant. I had, on several occasions, come across difficulties of the like nature.

A Mette is considered immortal. It is my conviction that the number of Mettes are gradually increasing just as the number of septs or sub-clans are increasing amongst the Garos. Khamals in all probability, during their emotional ecstasy may utter newly coined names which then become Mettes. The method of worship

and the items of offerings to the Mette are suggested by the khamal.

I have mentioned that according to the Garo concept the Mettes or the spirits are mainly malevolent ones. The Garos do not take any cognisance of the benevolent spirits, and no offering is made to them. Some danger or difficulty may befall on them if offerings are not made to a particular Mette or deity. It is, therefore, always the malevolent aspect of the Mettes to which the offering is made by the Garos only to appease their wrath.

There are only a few Mettes which are common to all the clans of the Garos. The same Mette is known by different names in different clans. The chief Mette which is called Thatthara Rabuga by one clan is called Bara Dogini by another and Dakkaba by yet another clan. I have collected as many as 230 names of Mettes from the different clans. The annexed chart will show the Mettes which are worshipped by the different clans. The list of the Mettes is not an exhaustive one. It is not possible to mention all the names mainly because the khamal or the other village people themselves do not remember all the names of the Mettes. This is very natural, particularly because of the absence of any script amongst the Garos. It is difficult to memorise the whole list. Excepting a few very common Mettes offerings to others are made very rarely. The other difficulty was that the khamals who actually are considered to be veterans in matters connected with their religion, do not like to give out full details of their religious matters to outsiders. I believe many of the khamals themselves do not know the names of many of the Mettes. The list of Mettes given by one khamal of a certain village differs from that given by another khamal in a different village although they were of the same clan.

The Garos have no concept of sin as we connote by the word nor have they any concept of merit or of any good work which elevates the soul or makes it pure and competent for living in heaven. I have already mentioned the Garo concept of the Mimang. The question of the Mimang going to heaven or to hell does not arise. They do not believe in anything like heaven or hell. These later concepts are the creation of more civilized people in whom the keenness of intellect and well planned ideas develop. In aboriginal societies, no such intellectually well developed philosophy can be expected. Their religious structure like their social structure is rather simple and clear cut. There is no room for intellectual mysticism. The aboriginal language also proves the absence of any finer distinction between feeling, emotion, etc. Their matter of fact tendencies mostly do not leave much room

for intellectual speculation of any high order. They are less imaginative. Their concept of Mette, therefore, cannot be expected to be anything very subtle or intricate in nature.

Short description of the few more common Mettes (deities) are given below:

Akhoraccha Sharkhogetel: They are two brothers and both of them are Nokmas. No other god requires greater offering or sacrifices than these two. They are the gods who can break any part of the body and can blind the eyes, etc. They may even kill a man outright. But the Garos say that these gods only catch hold of the rich people and never any poor man. Bulls, pigs, goats and fowls are sacrificed for appeasement of these gods. They worship them in the compound of the house in the morning.

These Nokma gods do not come alone. They are accompanied by the following peons and guards or *aide-de-camps* namely: Elengma, Gangma (brother and sister) and Amira, Jipakfa, Khusimang and Changdengfa. These are also worshipped along with the main gods.

Salgira and Chusmi (sun and moon): They are two brothers and have Munima and Sanima as their wives. They have peons namely: Gaoram Thenkhoram, Gatchuram Gasatrain and two female peons Drangma and Sandongma. The husbands of the latter are Thafinfa and Galaya, respectively. When Salgira and Chusmi get hold of a man he becomes ill, looses his appetite and feels weakness. Drink becomes bitter to him, and his body is emasculated. Necessary sacrifices are one bull, two goats, one pig and four fowls. They are worshipped in the compound during day time.

Dakkaba and Rabuga: They are two brothers. They are the lords of deities and hold the highest position among them. Playfair in his monograph 'The Garos' mentions Thatthara as the highest god, but what I find is that Thatthara is one of the peons of Dakkaba and Rabuga. I have also heard the khamals reciting mantras. They some time use the name of Thatthara Rabuga but more often they pronounce Dakkaba. I have witnessed the worship of Dakkaba. In the many altars built in a row for this purpose there was no Thatthara though all the other chief deities were represented. On enquiry, I was told Thatthara and Dakkaba were the two names for one and the same god. But here the khamal who gave me the information records Dakkaba as the chief of the gods and Thatthara as his peon. So here is a confusion. But more often he

is known as the Dakkaba than Thatthara. There are other peons also. They are Dakdammi, Rudami, Donay, Ransay and Churabudi. Of these the first two are females and other males.

These gods also break limbs of the body and cause all sorts of other illness and may even cause death.

Sacrifices offered are one goat, one pig, two fowls in the morning within the compound of the house.

Allemi: She is the queen. They told me she caused swelling and pain of the body. It is needless to say that she has a good retinue to move with her. The members of the retinue are Sangra, Nama, Cheksi, Eanga, Nial, Jakhurikka, Bangbolna, Bidingsona, Saljong, Batram, Khacchi, Themellam, Jugi, Melaram. She is appeased with rather smaller offerings than others. Only a pig or fowl or any other animal according as the test may indicate is sacrificed. Time: morning; place: compound.

Songading, Ridna and Chidna: They are three brothers. They cause dizziness and the body complexion becomes gradually black. Puppy and fowl are offered as sacrifice. They are worshipped in the jungle under a tree in the morning.

Duanakhing and his wife Bokjari: Another is Damjaray, wife of Nong. They cause madness, the patient runs like a mad man, moves his head and looks upward when under the spell of these spirits. They are appeased when a dog or a fowl (according to test) is offered to them as sacrifice. They are worshipped on the roof of the nok in the morning.

Okamma: Accompanying peons are Namindil and Nesoksar. This Mette causes fever and vomitting. The patient becomes weak as a finger as they say. They sacrifice fowls for this Mette in the nok or in the forest in the morning.

Magapafia: Her peons are Khoraba and Khorafin. She is a female deity and is worshipped just after child birth for the good of the baby. A fowl is sacrificed in the compound during morning. To celebrate this function, four big earthen jars of liquor are consumed by those present.

Saljatsia: Mette of children disease. The patient suffers from jaundice and turns yellow. A fowl is sacrificed for him at noon in the compound.

Matkhol and Bagatgeppa : They are two brothers and gods of children diseases. They cause fever and weakness. One fowl is sacrificed in the forest for them in the morning.

Chorsi : He also causes child disease. The abdomen becomes enlarged, and the body is emaciated. A fowl is sacrificed for him in the evening within the compound.

Aning : It is also the Mette of children disease. The patient suffers from fever causing emaciation with falling of hair. A pig or fowl is sacrificed, as the test may indicate, in the forest during morning time.

Chagop : This Mette causes swelling of hands and legs. Appeased when a fowl or pig is sacrificed for him. They perform the worship on the village path during morning.

Chigiccham : Makes man to suffer from pain in the hands and legs. The patient may become lame. A bull, pig or fowl is sacrificed according to the indications of the test (samania). This deity is worshipped within the compound during evening.

Dokkam : He is the deity of crippled limbs and pain. A fowl is sacrificed for him within the compound in the evening.

Oalgath : God of the same disease as Dokkam but the sacrifices, etc., are offered at the back door of the nok in the morning.

Jogo : Causes pain in the chest. The patient suffers from constant pain and feels trouble in breathing. One fowl is sacrificed for the appeasement of his anger in the forest during early morning.

Chongol : It is also a deity causing the same diseases as Jogo. In this case, boiled rice is offered to him under the nok during evening.

Khacchiramjong : When this Mette is angry with any man, the man suffers from sudden fever, pain in the chest and other parts of the body, and there is possibility of death. He is worshipped, and sacrifices are offered in the turning of the way during evening.

Aning Sugera : God of the same disease as Kacchiramjong. In this case, a bow is heated in the fire then it is touched in the chest of the patient, and then it is thrown away on the way. No

one again touches this bow. The common belief is that whoever may touch this bow will suffer from the said disease. The worship is performed near rivulets in the morning.

Songfrong : Causes pain in the eyes. So whenever one suffers from such pain if the samania (test) so indicates they offer one fowl as sacrifice to this god in the morning within the house compound.

Salbaman : He causes pain in the eyes, and finally the patient becomes blind. One cock is sacrificed for him. Time : morning ; place : compound of the house.

Chifang : When this Mette bites the patient, he suffers from swelling of the body together with ulceration. They sacrifice a fowl by the water side in the morning for the appeasement of this god.

Misinna : This deity causes severe troubles in the head such as headache, dizziness, etc. The sacrifice offered for him is a fowl killed under a tree called *borsil.* Place : forest ; time : morning.

Thongrengma : A female deity causes much trouble to the patient. The sphincter comes out, and the patient suffers from pain. They sacrifice one fowl near some water way in the morning for her.

Songsinnok : Another female deity is Songsinnok. Under her spell, one suffers from bowel troubles such as purging, dysentery, etc., also fever, and weakness results. The complexion turns gradually black. Sacrifice for this deity is a pig offered in the jungle in the morning.

Galwajok : He is responsible for causing severe attack of fever accompanied by vomitting. The patient becomes weak. One chicken is sacrificed within the nok for the appeasement of his anger. Time for offering is evening.

Khafakfak : Causes nausia, and the patient vomits in large quantity. Sacrifice offered for him is a chicken within the nok in the morning.

Chabal : Among the deities, she seems to be less harmful. She only works minor mischief. The patient dislikes his food which becomes distasteful to him. One pig is sacrificed for her within the nok of the patient at any time suitable to them.

Marang : The Garos consider this deity a witch. They are very much afraid of this deity and often mention her name in connection with some apprehended danger or risk. She causes failure of crops, fall from a tree or a hillock, etc., and also profuse bleeding caused by some wound. A fowl or a pig or both are sacrificed to her near some water in the morning. She has her peons namely, Sitharang, Chikama, Chithoal.

Chijong : It means tortoise. It is also worshipped because they think that it causes pain in the stomach, and so they make a tortoise with the trunk of the tree and offer a fowl as sacrifice near some water in the morning. She is a female deity.

Banfang : Works evil as others. He is considered as the god who also causes headache. He has three peons, Metti Mora, Balong Rekke and Barsalkhambe. They do not eract any altar in this case. They simply make a peacock with a bamboo and hang it on a tree in the forest where they sacrifice a fowl in the morning.

Goera : The Garos mean that the lightning and thunder are caused by this powerful god. When he is angry with some one the man suffers from ulceration such as from burning, etc. One cock is offered to him. They sacrifice this cock under a tree which has been burnt by a lightening generally in the morning, usually in the month of April.

Bidaoee : This deity does mischief to a man by causing him to suffer from fever. The patient breaks down completely. Their general conception is that this deity catches hold of the life, i.e., the jangi, of the patient and goes on ducking it in the water. The patient, therefore, gets fever and cold. One pig is offered as sacrifice to him near some water pool in the morning.

Nokhungdenfak : Causes high fever together with such severe headache that the patient feels, as if, his head will burst. They offer a puppy as sacrifice to her. This sacrifice is offered on the roof of the nok in the noon.

Oasrong : They could not say if this deity is a male or a female. Nor could they give me names of the peons. This deity is worshipped and given a fowl as sacrifice after child birth. They say blood discharge stops after they offer this sacrifice. Time : morning ; place : compound of the house.

Garamanthrai : The Garos consider this deity as the god of pain in the body. A perfectly black goat is sacrificed for him in

the jungle under a tree where they build the altar with a decorated bamboo.

Udum : When this deity is angry, the patient suffers from pain in the stomach. The altar for him is rather peculiar. They make a figure of a man on the earth in the path and place one plantain plant near the head and another near the foot and also place a small piece of bamboo on the chest of the figure. This forms the altar. They sacrifice one black goat to this deity.

These are the names of some of the innumerable deities of the Garos. Most people including the khamal cannot name the complete list of their deities. I believe, names of the same god change sometimes in different locality ; also some localities have some gods of their own which are not known to any other village. It is, therefore, very difficult to get the names of all the Mettes worshipped by the Garos. A list of the names of the deities worshipped by the Garos as far as I could collect them is given at the end of this chapter.

I have given above only a few names of the deities from which it will be seen that the Garos conceive of their gods as evildoers or malevolent ones. Benevolent gods are perhaps rare, and I had no occasion to hear name of any such deity mentioned, nor could they mention such names when asked for.

A few of the enlisted deities have also certain benevolent aspect according to their conception. But mostly only the malevolent aspects of the deities are worshipped.

I have mentioned Marang as a deity in the above list. But there is another sense also conveyed by this word, which is identical with the word taboo used in the sense of sinful or unlucky added to the sense of evil, and at times also means unlawful or prohibited.

The Garos do not go out in the field on the day when a child is born to one of the villagers. It is marang to violate this rule and whoever does so his crops will be cursed and hence spoiled.

It is a marang to eat any of the agricultural products, and fruits of the season before the Gala or the festivals are performed. I have already mentioned the different festivals of the year. It is a marang to kill a man. They used to perform a ceremony named Marang Harikkha on their return from war to ward off the evil of the blood spots on their body marked during the war.

Playfair mentions, among others, that wearing clothes of sister's husband touching the clothes of her male relatives such as uncle, brother, sister's husband are considered as marang.

It is also considered as marang if a hen crows like a cock. If a cock crows on the roof of a nok in the evening, the owner, it is considered, would die soon. If a pig enters the dwelling house of a man, it is also considered an evil omen by some but not by all.

Whenever, there is bleeding from any wound or any cut in the body they call it marang. I think here they do not mean taboo but mean that it is the working of that evil spirit.

I have mentioned samania when considering the deities of the Garos. Samania is a test by which they ascertain the spirit who has caused the trouble or disease. What they do to know this and to determine the sacrifice necessary to appease the wrath of the deity is that they run to the khamal and give him the details of the disease. The khamal then makes a small bamboo bow called *phongshi* and hang it by attaching another thread at the centre of the bow string. Now the khamal holds this thread with his two fingers, giving the bow free scope to oscillate freely.

Then he calls all the probable names of the deities who may have done this mischief. The khamal names so many deities and so hurriedly that even the other Garos cannot make out what he says. This process is continued. When the phongshi oscillates with the pronouncing of the particular name of a spirit the khamal understands that that is the spirit responsible for the evil. He then also finds out by the same test what offerings the spirit wants to relieve the man of his trouble. This test is known as samania.

There is a second method of samania. It is done simply with a piece of small thread held by the two fingers of the right hand of the khamal. He then continues to call out the names of the spirits. When the right spirit is mentioned the khamal's hand begins to tremble, and gradually this becomes so violent that the hand of the khamal actually beats the earth, as if, he has been possessed by the spirit.

List of the Names of the Deities

Abet
Ajong
Aloa
Animetti (H)
Asri Cchimma
Atong
Adema
Akhoratcha
Amanda
Aning
Athla
Aimarong
Allemi
Ambi
Aning Sugera
Athlagolgot

Bagaba
Balwathok
Bang
Bangoa
Basuli
Beut
Bigrong
Bimafia
Bokjari
Boldam
Brara
Bagatgeppa
Bandari
Bangalrishi
Bankhai
Behuli
Bhoot
Bilwathok
Bisik
Bol
Bondeo
Bungchi
Bakra
Banfang
Bangalsini
Barangini
Betram
Bidaoee
Bima
Birata
Boldak
Borgoa
Burugangbin

Chabal
Chendi
Chidna
Chigitchu
Chiniduara
Chirabatta
Chisik
Chongol
Chorsri
Churu
Chagop
Chi
Chifang
Chigithel
Chinijol
Chiramjogo
Cholbera
Chonkhamfe
Chufal
Chusmi
Chambugong
Chibreng
Chigiccham
Chijong
Chioni
Chiremma
Choloni
Chorshi
Churabudi
Chusmi Rodofa

Dagal
Dakkal
Dalmong
Daorengnia
Den oata
Dokhu Khanga
Doshishi
Dura
Dakkaba
Daladamdar
Dalumeddai
Dap
Didabiskhal
Dokkam
Duanakhing
Durajaga
Dakkaba bucchima
Dallachiring
Damdel
Darichik
Dogini
Dorom
Duba

Galfuru
Getri
Goggot
Gongot
Grimetti
Galmakhdoa
Goera
Goncho
Goramanthrai
Grunganang
Galwajak
Goera borfang
Gongna
Grakchi
Gulwathok

Habinda
Ha ratta
Hasong
Hadem
Hashi
Hathepkala
Hakhom
Hasim Ronkhol

Jabal
Jajong
Jaramjong
Jaroka
Jogugorgot
Jafaka
Jakthaka
Jarenga
Joaka
Juguchongkheng
Jagijim
Jantha
Jarkhifang
Jogo

Kali
Khapri
Khelthepram
Kholjong
Khurup
Khusirakka (Masor)
Kamakkha
Khatchi (majri)
Khira
Khonchu
Khusi
Khafakfak
Khatchiramjong
Khirsargong
Khorena
Khusirokka

Leng

Magapafia
Marang
Matchadotru
Mianoa
Mijam
Moira

Makchisiring
Marang Oksara
Matkhol
Midam
Mi sinna
Mukmarang

Mandria
Matcha dokdri
Meisri
Midamdar
Moila
Mukskhal

Nagini
Nakhalrimma
Nokham
Nokkhfe
Nokri meisri

Nagrachidabong
Nepal
Nokhangdenfak
Noknatheng
Nokrisi

Nagri
Nokam
Nokkalisi
Nok-oai
Noksho

Oasronga
Okkafro

Okamma
Ongama

Okandengdenga
Ongrani

Pasra

Pochem

Raba
Rakashi
Rama Bisi
Rawakheng
Risri (Rishi)
Rongrongfa
Rongthaini

Rabuga
Rakkha
Ramarisri
Ridna
Rongdik
Rongsep
Roong

Raja onkhal
Rama bibra
Rangsan
Rishi
Rong metti
Rongsri

Salbaman
Salgira
Saljong
Saljong Thongkhandi
Sankhini
Sikhar
Soksa
Songmisinga

Salbongi
Saljatchi
Saljong Khundruak
Salmen drai
Sarkhogettel
Simisonga
Songading
Songsinock

Saldam
Saljatsia
Saljong okkappa
Salnokhra
Sembu
Sirni
Songfrong
Songsroka

Tairambal
Thongrengma

Thatborang
Thoro

Thatthara

Udum

Wadot
Wal (metti)

Wakchifang
Wakhrang

Walgath
Washingkhap

CHAPTER VI

Mythology

The Garos have certain stories about their gods, etc., narrating how and why they were first worshipped by men. They give different versions of the same story. As they had nothing in writing the stories were stored in the memory—some through the ages. It is no wonder, therefore, that the stories may have undergone substantial changes due to the individual emotional tendency and taste of the story tellers. This change in the text of the stories, I believe, is a continuous process. It is likely that what we get now is completely a new version of the old original stories from which material details have been dropped, and new ones introduced therein. Still they are of some value when we consider the Garo life and their society, especially, their belief in the origin of their customs.

I could gather only a few of the many stories. Only a few people know them, and it was not an easy job for me to find them out.

I shall mention a short story about the origin of the group named 'Shangma'.

(1) One day a Garo was roaming in the forest in quest of games. He had his bow and arrow with him. His young baby was also tied on his back (in the fashion I have already described) with a piece of cloth. He was a Marak (clan). As he was passing by a tree he saw a kite sitting on the top of it. At once, he aimed his arrow at it when all at once the baby shouted out 'Kha Shangma' which literally means, "Well, am I a Shangma". The father hearing this gave him his self-selected title, and thenceforth this title came into vogue. Shangma has no meaning in Garo language. It was merely an exclamation the boy uttered. But 'Shong' means village and 'ma' as a suffix denotes interogation. The expression of the boy would then mean a question put to his father enquiring whether they had reached the village. The father evidently mistook it.

(2) I will now say what they think of the creation of the Earth. There are many versions of this story. I was able to collect only two or three of them. I have reasons to believe that these

stories are neither known to all the groups nor do many people feel inquisitive about the origin of creation.

(i) One (Atong) version says: There was water and only water in the early days and nothing else. Babra, the God of creation, was present everywhere. Dogini was his wife and helper. (The man who told me this story could not give me the name of Babra's wife. I got it from another man. This man told me that Babra is also known by another name—Naramande. But later on, I found Naramande was the first man created on the earth. Such confusions are not rare in stories, and it is difficult to make out which is the correct version.) Babra saw this vast unending sheet of water and felt like creating the earth. He called Akheng (a Crab) to help him and asked it to go down under this deep water to fetch some clay from the bottom. So the Akheng obeyed his order. But after a while, it came back and reported its inability to find any clay. Babra then asked Nacchi (a variety of fish known as *ukal* fish in north Mymensingh) to bring some earth.

Nacchi went deep under the water to reach the bottom. There it collected as much clay as was possible to carry in its small tail and came up. Babra was pleased and created the earth with that clay. Then other plants, animals and men were created.

(ii) Another version of the story runs thus: In the early days of creation, there was no hard ground to stand upon. There was only soft clay mixed with only muddy water. They have a conception of something like what in Bengali is called *patal*, the nether regions, which they call *muddam*. There are also gods living there. Babra created a woman named Metti Maldifa who was partly a goddess and another man named Kamal Khatchifa. This Kamal had beard three yards long and a pair of moustaches on the upper lip consisting of seven hairs only. These moustaches also were so long that they touched the ground.

These two were the first human beings. When they came, they found it impossible to rest anywhere. So they made a raft with bamboo and placed another bamboo on the raft to represent the altar where they offered their first offering. This was the first worship of man. According to them, the earth and water are two brothers. They offered *chi* (water) and *ha* (earth), one goat and a fowl as sacrifice, and addressing Matram Jaramfa (Otter) they prayed, "Oh, Matram Jaramfa, you turn this earth into hard ground", and the solid earth was formed. Now the water had to be removed. They addressed Dakhong Chiramfa (king fisher) and prayed, "Oh, Dakhong Chiramfa, you be good and kind and show the way for

the water to flow." The bird did so, and the water flowed down following the direction of the flight of the bird. Thus rivers and springs were formed.

After the *khrita,* i.e., the worship, they saw dark patches on the body of the Chusmi (moon). As he was so ill they worshipped for his recovery, and Chusmi was thereby cured of his disease. It is due to this that we get the moon light now. During the new moon, Chusmi hides himself as without this men could not have any conception of darkness. Hence the utility of new moon is determined. During lunar eclipse, Chusmi falls ill again. Therefore, people again worship and offer sacrifices for his recovery.

After the ground was formed Maksem banga (a human being) and Demgatee, his wife, the two human beings on earth, had two sons Bone and Jane. When these boys first came to the earth, they had no strength either to move or show any indication of life. The parents were sad and went to the khamal (priest) for advice. The khamal advised them to pray to Babra and worship him as he, as the god of creation, could help them. They did as they were asked to do, and the two sons found their legs on recovery. They grew up and worked in the hadang (field) and in the forest for their living.

But that was not enough to make things easy going for the first men on earth. They had to face many other difficulties and had to seek help from the deities to tide over them. Troubles arose with Aje and Girje, two sisters, and the nieces of Salgira and Chusmi (the sun and the moon). Days were passing on but one day they had pain in the abdomen and also headache. Again they sought for some remedy and had to worship Haadom Barma. A fowl was sacrificed for him, and they were cured. It is the origin of the Khrittas. They offered sacrifices one after another as necessity arose to the malevolent gods.

Aje and Girje were cured. The grew up and married Niba and Jonja who were brothers. They were passing their days happily. But things were not to be so easy going for them. Before their marriage, Aje and Girje used to make purchases from the market. They wanted to follow the same practice after marriage and told their husbands, "Well, we used to purchase our own things before marriage and must do so now too." The husbands had to agree. Aje and Girje went to make their purchases from Dambogrianthi-benagong, a market. There they purchased their clothes and bangles and came back home safely.

It so happened that the two brothers, i.e., the husbands of Aje

and Girje had to go to market one day. The two women remained at home. No male members were there to look after their protection. Salgira (the sun god) and Chusmi (the moon god) the two maternal uncles availed themselves of this opportunity and came to the house of Aje and Girje. There they had sexual intercourse with them. Salgira and Chusmi went away before the husbands came back. But that could not ease the situation. Niba and Jonja found out the mischief that had been done and became revengeful on Salgira and Chusmi.

They searched about and caught hold of Salgira and Chusmi. A struggle ensued. It was never an easy fight for men to stand against gods. Finally, Salgira cut the head from Niba's shoulders. Jonja was now helpless and not finding sufficient strength in him had to give up the fight and run away, never to come back again. Salgira and Chusmi went away victorious. This is the end of the story. The story teller could not say what happened to Aje and Girje.

There is another version of this fight. Niba Jonja was the name of a single person who married the two nieces of Salgira and Chusmi, namely, Aje and Girje. One day on his way to the market, Niba met Salgira and enquired, "Well, where are you going?" Salgira replied, "I am going to your place." Niba was going to the market, so he could not accompany Salgira. He, therefore, told him, "You see, I am just going to the market. So I can't accompany you, but your niece is there to receive you; you go and have your food and drink from her to your liking." Salgira came to Aje and had a pleasant day with her. He had a good feast and drank to his heart's content. As there was no one to stand on his way he indulged in sexual intercourse with Aje.

Niba came home and heard about this affair. He became furious and decided to kill Salgira at all cost. He equipped himself fully for a fight with Salgira and went to Rengda Gasal Saljong Batram, a hill whereby Salgira passes. He kept there waiting for Salgira. But when actually Salgira came near Niba had no strength to attack him. Rays of Salgira were too strong and bright for Niba to stand, and he could not but droop down and feel sleepy. All his efforts thus proved futile. He could not even mark a single scratch on Salgira's person. Niba came back home dejected.

Now Aning Khacchifa, a god who can tell of heaven, earth and under-world, came to him and said, "Well Niba, there is only one means by which you can defeat Salgira. It is this, if you can find out the jewel from where Dakhafa Dalokfa (a god) throws the dirts

of his house where he keeps it hidden, pick it up and take it with you when you go to fight with Salgira and you are sure to win the battle."

Niba at once acted upon the advice given to him and found out the jewel from where he was directed to search. He was glad and again started to fight with Salgira with added vigour. This time, Salgira felt the misfortune was overtaking him. The blinding brightness of the jewel made it impossible for Salgira to pass by his usual road. He kept himself hidden, so there was no sun for seven days and seven nights. The men on earth became anxious and apprehensive and thought that this absence of Salgira would mean death to all beings on earth. They all went to Niba and requested him to realise *Samakra Wak Samal,* a fine from Salgira for his misbehaviour and make a compromise. Niba agreed. But Salgira failed to give a pig to Niba according to the terms of the compromise. Niba got hold of Salgira to get his promised pig. It is then that an (Naoang Mamoka) eclipse was brought about. Men of earth again prayed to Niba to let Salgira go, and he was released. (Niba was turned into a lizard by the curse of Salgira, as some say.)

Birth of Fire

Nabaji has five children, two sons and three daughters. She experienced no difficulty at the time of birth of Salgira (sun) Chusmi (moon), Chi (water) and Ha (earth). But the birth of her last daughter *Oal* (fire) proved fatal to her, and she died. Oal was sorry and was lamenting her mother's death when all the garments of her mother were burnt by the flames of Oal. At this, the two brothers Salgira and Chusmi became angry and accused Oal saying, "Well, mother died in giving birth to you, you are the cause of her death, you ought to have been sorry for that but, on the contrary, you have burnt all her garments. You are a Dakal (demon)." So they all drove her away from home. Oal felt insulted and went away to the other side of the ocean. Salgira and others were now at a loss to find out some means to burn the dead body of their mother for want of fire. All their efforts failed. The dead body was just rotting on the ganchi (the pyre).

At last finding no other way, they went to *karat* (squirrel) and asked him to go to the other side of the ocean and bring Oal back. Karat agreed and went there. He met Oal and requested her to come back again. But Oal refused. Karat then devised a means to bring fire. He took some bark of a plant and lit it with fire. He then took the bark by his tail and swam across the sea keeping

the tail above the water level all the while. But no sooner did he reach the shore and try to get on it than his tail went down into water and the fire was extinguished. He had to go back to Oal again. This time also he met with no better result. Oal then advised him to get fire by friction of bamboos (*oal khong khang*) to tide over the difficulty caused by want of fire. Oal, however, refused to come back to her brothers and sisters again.

Thus following Oal's advice they got fire for their mother's cremation. They built a delang (house for the spirit of the dead) there and made a khamma (effigy). During *bari* (when crops of the rainy season are collected), they gave a feast in memory of their mother.

If Salgira (sun) and Chusmi (moon) had not done these things men on earth would have known nothing about delang or khamma and would not have performed the Chugan Rengua festival. On that occasion, they did not kill any bull during the Chugan Rengua. Only a buffalo was killed, and the only cow they had was killed at the time of their mother's death.

Another version of the birth of fire is as follows: Salmera had three sons, Salgira, Chusmi and Oal. She (Salmera) died while giving birth to Oal. Thyakjani Khamjani (the mother of Misi Saljong), Salgira, Chusmi and Oal were present at her bed side during Salmera's death. When all of them were mourning over the dead, garments of all those present caught fire due to close proximity of Oal (fire). They naturally got irritated and thought it to be a bad omen. They told her, "You are a Dakal (demon) so you can't live here." She was driven away from home. Oal went away offended. One side of the problem was thus solved but on the other hand new difficulties arose on the question of cremation of the dead body. The body which was kept lying was rotting every day but no means could be found out to burn it. So they had to send a squirrel with a request to Oal to come back. But Oal refused. The squirrel tried its best to bring fire, but was unsuccessful and finally accepted what Oal advised it to do. The squirrel came back and had fire in the same way as in the previous story.

The dead body was properly cremated. Now to make out a khamma (effigy), *simul* and *mandar* (names of varieties of trees) were necessary. They asked Khiring Damtee Bugasalgo, a human carpenter, to fetch the required wood for them. He departed but came back unsuccessful because in those early days of creation, there were no such trees on the earth. Then Misi Saljong (the sun god of paddy) came and said that they could get the required wood

from Domtingbrifalwang Adong, a place on the other side of the water. From there they got the wood and cut out the khamma. They then fixed up days for Salhari Chugan the annual festival also known as Chugan Rengua and Galmakdoa the festival in connection with the worship of the burnt ashes of the forest of the field.

During these festivals, only lizard and a variety of rat called *gappi* were sacrificed because there was no cow then. It was created later.

They did not know how to prepare liquor, because there was no *oanthi* (the cake of powdered rice necessary to prepare liquor). Niba's wives Aje and Girje tried previously to prepare liquor of their own accord. They found the preparation good. So they gave them some liquor now when they were celebrating the festival. Here they first tasted liquor.

This did not end their difficulties for they felt the want of a krum (drum) during the festival. Salgira now sent Nisisagre (god) out to make one krum. But Nisisagre at first could not make any. He came with a *dwamserang* (a musical instrument made of bamboo, resembling a lyre). So they had to do without a krum. Only the dwamserang was played during the festival. To celebrate this festival, all the men present wore masks to appear like hukku (hulluk) and bear, and painted their body black with soot from the fireplace. Thenceforth, the complexion of men became dark.

It is to be noted how the names of persons in the two stories differ and how the facts also differ from one another. It is impossible to say which one of these versions is genuine.

First offerings to Salgira and Chusmi: Some childish and mischievous propensity prompted the action of Salgira (sun) and Chusmi (moon) when they directed their evil power against Done (human being). The poor boy was at once down with fever and other complaints. Salgira and Chusmi did this only to see if man offered any sacrifices to them if they did any mischief to them.

Seeing the poor boy suffering his father Donjing went to the khamal (priest) to seek advice for the relief of his son. The khamal found out the spirits working the mischief. He advised Donjing to sacrifice one bull, two pigs, two goats and four fowls to Salgira and Chusmi. He agreed and did as he was advised. The khamal offered the sacrifice in due form naming all the hills where the gods live. All the villagers were invited to attend the ceremony.

The gods were very pleased to get the offerings and released the captive Done. The villagers then burnt the animals and cooked them. They had a merry feast. The patient too was cured within a short time.

Marang Harikka

In the early days, the Garos used to wage many wars. Such an occasion arose once (perhaps the first of such warfare) when people of one village living under a certain Nokma went to work for their hadang (field for cultivation) beyond their area and entered another Nokma's jurisdiction. This was a cause of conflict, and they started fighting. There were heavy casualties on both sides. Finally, both the parties ran away to their own area. Thus neither party gained or lost any land.

After the battle, they went back to their villages, and they were given liquor to drink by their mothers. They first of all offered the liquor to Geora Kharkhambi (thunder god) because they believed that he was with them when they faught. After that, they drank to their heart's content. They had killed too many men, so it was a marang (evil). They then called the khamal and performed Marang Harikka, i.e., the purification ceremony to counteract the supposed evil influence of the blood shed. They had a happy time. They drank liquor and danced with mellam (sword) and *sepphi* (shield) in accompaniment of musical instruments. All the time they held in their hands the heads of men slain in the fight.

They went to the house of their respective mothers then and had similar enjoyments. Then from there they went to nokpanthe (bachelors' dormitory) and had merriment there too. The women folk then boiled the heads of the dead and took them to a stream, cleared them, and the skulls were brought back home. These skulls were all put in a basket which was kept is the privy of the Nokma's nok. All the skulls were kept is one place because they performed Marang Harikka in one house only. If skulls were kept in different places marang, i.e., evil would befall on them all.

Even to this day, they offer liquor to Goera Kharkhambi first before they drink it. They pray at the same time to him saying, "We never drink before we offer liquor to you. So be pleased and never leave us when we are out in the jungle or for war."

This collection of human skulls was once a matter of pride to them. The more the number of skulls the higher was their

position and respectibility. Time has changed. It is not possible now to kill men and go unpunished. So they have given up that practice. But now they collect skulls of all the games they can bag. This brings them fame in society and is a subject much spoken of.

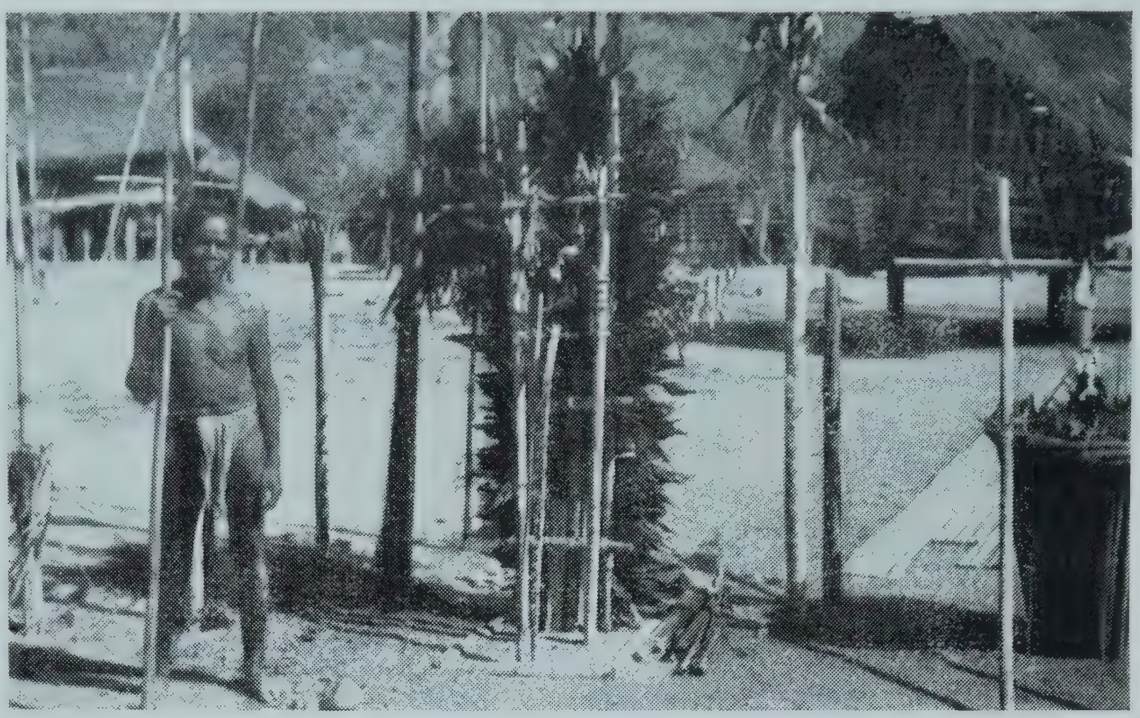
In the Rongkhol, a cave of that name in the hills in the village Makhagrim Manda lived the king Ravan and the queen Chisik both of whom were gods. In that same village, two Garos named Drifa and Chongdingfa lived with their respective wives, Gabe and Changbe. One day it so happened that *Do-ado,* the bird of the night (possibly a bird of the owl class), went to Chisik and Ravan and lodged a false complaint against Gabe and Changbe. The allegation was that Gabe and Changbe always stole away whatever cooked food they found. So it had become impossible for Do-ado to keep any rice or curry for its use. *Do-ado tholle hanna,* i.e., Do-ado told a lie. At this the attendants of Chisik and Rakkha-Chelberem went to the place and made the jangis (the life force of Gabe and Changbe) prisoners bound them and took them away. Immediately, the two women were down with fever attended with vomiting, headache and pain all over the body. They were badly suffering. So Drifa and Chengdingfa had to run to the khamal (priest) for the remedy according to samania (the test performed by the priest to ascertain which deity worked the evil).

On the other hand, both Ravan and Chisik became afraid of having taken the wives of the two men as prisoners and fled away to a distant place named Dura and began to live in a house in that village. They buried the two jangis (the lives) under the nok in the ground and thought they were now safe.

But both the husbands were searching heaven and earth for the jangis of their wives. At last, they came to Dura and began to search for the jangis there by demolishing the house. When they were searching the earth underneath the house they saw the hair of their wives. At this stage, the lord of Dura, a god named Poreng Mette Fongseng fanthe, came and told them to offer some sacrifice to secure the release of the jangis. Hearing this, Drifa and Chongdingfa went to the market for some purchases. There they met the two daughters of Chisik named Aning and Battajing and at once took them prisoners. This was a just retaliation of their own grievance. Chisik and Ravan now found the situation compromising. Then men offered sacrifices to Chisik and Ravan, and they, in return, offered sacrifice to the two Garos. Both the parties prayed for release of the respective prisoners and sacrificed a fowl. "We will let go the jangis we took prisoners, thou too

Offering a fowl

Offering Marang



Worshipping Dakkaba

Altar of Ramabibra

please follow the same", they said and released jangis. This is the origin of the sacrifice for Chisik.

Dakkaba Worship

One day two Garo women named Dome and Rokme went to Dakkaba and asked from him a metallic dish and a curry bowl for their own use. Dakkaba refused to give them the articles they wanted. When one day Dakkaba went out for a walk, Dome and Rokme stole from his house those two articles during his absence. When Dakkaba came back he found the articles missing and knew the fact. The evil influence and the curse of Dakkaba (chief god) or Thatthara Rabuga (the same god) then brought Dome and Rokme's troubles. They fell ill and went to bed with high fever and pain. A boy named Abuk Digifa and a girl named Donma Ramsefa came to them and said, "You see it is only because Dakkaba is causing this harm that you are suffering and nothing else." The father of the patients was present there and heard what the boy and the girl said. He hurried to the market to purchase pigs, goats and fowls for sacrifice and came home with them. There he called the priest named Nangafa Methe Thora who recited the mantras and offered the sacrifices to Dakkaba. Dakkaba was highly pleased to be worshipped and to get the sacrifices. So he was appeased even without the stolen property, and the patients too were cured shortly after.

Misi Saljong

In those days, men lived on wild potato and other roots. They had no rice to eat for rice was not then available on the earth.

Two men of those days named Thaofa and Thagonfa were going for marketing. It was a long distance. They sat down under a tree to rest a while. At the same time, Misi Saljong (sun god of paddy) chanced to come by the same road. He too sat there for rest. They were talking and gossiping all of them together. At last, Misi Saljong said that they should eat their midday meal. Misi Saljong had boiled rice with him but the two men had no boiled rice to eat. So they felt rather ashamed to eat together and went behind a stone boulder to take their own food, leaving Misi Saljong where he was.

Misi Saljong became curious and bethought himself, "What must be the cause which prevents their eating with me, let me see what it is." Having half finished his meal, he went to the two men who were eating their food behind the boulder. He saw

they were taking only potato and nothing else. "Well friends, what are you taking ? Why don't you take rice ?", he said. They replied, "We search out potatoes from the jungle and take them, we cannot find any paddy to get rice therefrom." Misi Saljong then said, "Let me taste your food." He then took some potatoes and found them rather of good taste. In return, he offered some boiled rice from his own stock to them. They all sat together and shared their meals. It was a good meal for them. Misi Saljong was pleased with them. He said, "You just cultivate your hadang (hill slopes for cultivation), I shall give you seeds of rice." Then they all went to the market and returned to their home after the necessary purchase. They recounted to their wives what Misi Saljong had told them. Being assured by Misi Saljong they went to work in the hadang (hill slopes for cultivation). Time came to sow the seeds after the forest was burnt down. They now called Misi Saljong who came and gave them the promised seeds of rice. They sowed the seed in time. The cultivation proved to be very successful. There was bumper crop. They built a house in the hadang to protect the crop from the wild animals. They reaped a good harvest and brought the paddy home. They enjoyed their first crop with boundless enthusiasm. They cooked rice and ate their food. In their hurry, they forgot to call Misi Saljong. At this Misi Saljong was angry and he said, "Ah, did I not give you seeds and now how could you eat the crop without offering it to me first ?" His wrath fell on them. The poor men fell victims to fever and other troubles. Then a priest named Khacchi Chusmi Ranse Bijare came to them. After samania (test), he told them, "You offer one goat and one fowl in front of your *jam* (i.e., paddy store house) as sacrifice in honour of Misi Saljong." They followed the advice and offered the sacrifice. As a result, they were cured. From that time onwards, people offer sacrifices to Misi Saljong and worship him during the annual festival known as Chugan Rengua.

Cow Sacrifice (killing)

When the mother of Salgira and Chusmi died, they brought a bull and a man to kill. Both the animal and the man were tied to a tree. But when the time came for killing they found that the bull was bellowing (it could not cry) but the man was crying just as they do. Then they thought that if they kill the man his relatives would be very much in grief and cry for him. But in the case of the bull nothing like this would happen. So they decided upon killing the bull and let the man go. From this came the custom of cow killing after the death of a person.

Story of Hachura

Finta, the young daughter of Hachura, was a child who was almost constantly crying. The mother became very much disgusted with her and one day went out and left the child in the jungle. She came back and caught hold of a human child. The child became ill in consequence. The father was then offering worship to god. Hachura was then coming by that road. Seeing the food, rice, curry, etc., being offered, she took them and fed Finta with them. By this feeding, Finta stopped her crying. When Finta stopped, the human baby too was cured of his fever.

These are the few stories (only a very small fraction of the total number) relating to the innumerable gods and goddesses of the Garos, which I was able to collect.

Inconsistency is not rare in the names and legends I have already mentioned above. The more I enquired the more I was convinced that it was impossible to get any absolutely consistent statement about many particular facts. There is nothing in writing, and there is migration of the people from one place to another. The different versions of the same story elucidate its different aspects. This is by no means a negligible gain, though distortion is inevitable in such a case as in the case of secondary elaboration in dreams. They are valuable though they make the situation more complicated.

There are many other stories known to the Garos. The 'Bandi Dikkhi' story has many features in common with the story of the *Ramayana* of the Hindus. I have not mentioned that story because of its bulk. I heard the story being recited like a drama for three nights. Even then it was not completed.

Major Playfair also collected some stories and published them in his book, 'The Garos'.

I shall now discuss in short some of the characteristic features of these mythological stories.

In the stories, one striking point is that the deities and men seem to have had free communication. The deities were then visible and discussed matters with men on friendly terms. Questioning the Garos on this aspect of their story, I was told that in the early days it was quite possible. The deities do not do so now nor can they be seen. A gulf has been created between them and the deities.

The Christian Bible says God made men according to his own image. Psycho-analysis teaches us just the opposite and says that man imagined god after his own image and attributed to him importance and omniscience and other qualities for his own solace. Such a tendency is also noticeable in the deifying of men even by the civilised people. Jesus Christ, Mohammad, Buddha, Krishna and even Ramkrishna are only a few examples to mention. Even Gandhi is being deified by a particular section of people. If we follow this argument, we may conclude that these Garo deities possibly were human beings with certain special qualities or powers. But it is more probable that these deities were conceived by the people as different situations arose, and they propitiated them to get over some difficulty.

Some of the deities have been conceived as both benevolent and malevolent, Misi Saljong gave them rice but punished them when they forgot to offer it to him before they partook of it. This ambivalent tendency is also present in the general behaviour of the Garos towards an outsider. Mention has been made in the dreams of the Garos about the appearance of a gentleman which they interpret as Dakkaba. They consider such a dream as precursor of some epidemic or some grave evil. On the other hand, they expect something interesting to see or hear from the foreigners.

This brings us to another aspect of the stories. The deities invariably bite men only to get some sort of offering from them. This is a very curious conception. When they conceive the Mette to be all powerful there can be no reason why they should punish men only to get a fowl or a pig, etc. It cannot be for food only. For the Mette (god) may have food as much as he or she likes. One khamal told me that the Mette bit a man to realise offerings from him because the benefits conferred on him by the Mette would not be otherwise remembered by him. According to another khamal, man does some harm to the Mette, and he then bites the man and releases him when he gets the offering. Some say it is the nature of the Mette to bite a man whenever an opportunity occurs to test whether he offers any sacrifice or not. One factor is common in these different opinions. It is this that the nature of the Mette is such that it always seeks an acknowledgement of its authority. Similarity of this attitude of the Garos with regard to their Mette is also to be seen with their relation with the parents and also with the Laskars and Nokmas. Fear of the Mette and fear of the spirit of the dead have, it seems to me, the same unconscious mechanism as I have discussed in the chapter, "The fear of the dead". The projection of the characteristics of

the father image on the Mette is responsible for their hostile conception of it.

In some stories, illicit sex indulgence of two types is noticed. In one type, the maternal uncle indulges in sexual intercourse with his niece, i.e., his sister's daughter. In the other type, sexual intimacy took place between brother and sister. It is to be noted in this connection that I have not heard any mythological story wherein the son had sexual intimacy with the mother. Here a very intricate question suggests itself. Mythological stories indicate the electra complex situations and incest situations but not the proper oedipus situation. Why should that be the case? In the Garo society, the oedipus tendency is openly seen in the form of marrying the mother-in-law. Why no reference to it is noticed in the stories? These stories are the creations of the Garos. Their mental tendencies can be read in them. The oedipus tendencies have made some inroad on the social custom and have comparatively more expression in songs than the electra complex. It may be that this electra tendency has found its channel through the stories where particularly the deities and not men are the performers of the act, although the female partners in the Salgira myth is considered as a human being, born of the sister of Salgira. What is more rigorously prohibited has found its way in the myth when the deities act as the father image.

Reference should be made of the nokpanthe system here again. I have mentioned in the chapter discussing about nokpanthe that the nokpanthe system has its root in the unconscious motivation of avoiding the oedipus and incest situations. But here we find that the electra complex has appeared in the picture. The girls of the family live with their parents, and only the boys are sent to the nokpanthe. Is it not the electra complex which is responsible for this custom? If we accept this view, we are forced to conclude that the nokpanthe system has served a double purpose, viz., the the father obtains the unconscious facility for the electra complex (c. f. 'Goshen' mentioned in the chapter, Jokes, Slangs and Abusive Language), and the normal heterosexual situation by sending away his rival son who like Chisik (deity) runs the danger of an incest relation with the sister. Another point is that the incest desire which is repressed may have found its gratification in the sexual union with the daughter of the sister. The sister's daughter may be taken as a combined image of the daughter and a substitute of the sister.

CHAPTER VII

Matriarchy

In Assam, besides the Garos, there are only a few other tribes amongst whom matriarchy may be found at the present day. Some anthropologists have tried to show that certain social customs and observances during particular functions and festivities or some relevant references in folktales or preference of females in some rituals, etc., indicate presence of matriarchy in that tribal society in the past. I am not concerned here, for the purpose of this paper, to discuss the relevance or propriety of such assumptions. Matriarchy prevails amongst the Khasi, Syntengs and Lynngam tribes as well of Assam. It is also to be noted that all these tribes inhabit the border districts of Khasi and Jayantia Hills on the east of the Garo Hills. Unfortunately, very little has been recorded about the Syntengs and the Lynngams. Apart from these Assam tribes, there are matriarchal tribes in Upper Burma in the contiguous districts of Assam. This system is also prevalent amongst the Nayars of Travancore and Cochin States. There are other smaller groups in the same States who also follow matrilineal customs. In the north-west part of undivided India also matriarchal societies are found. Most of the last mentioned area is now within the jurisdiction of the newly formed State of Pakistan.

In the matriarchal societies, the inheritance, in all cases, does not follow the same line. In the case of the Garos, the property goes from mother to daughter. If there are more than one daughter in the family the mother selects, as I have already mentioned, one to be the Nokna (heiress) who inherits the main portion of the property. Nowadays other daughters are also given a small portion of the parental property during their marriage. They usually go away from the family to establish a separate family unit. In the case of the Khasis, the youngest daughter inherits. But in the case of the Siem who is the religious and secular head of Khasi states, the succession devolves on the son of the eldest uterine sister of the deceased. Failing this the son of the next sister succeeds. In the Myllium state, the Siemship is inherited by the eldest of his uterine brothers, failing this by the eldest son of his sister, failing this by the son of his sister's daughter, failing this also by the eldest son of his mother's sister, failing which by the uterine sister, etc. A female Siem is succeeded by the eldest son. The Syntengs also follow the Khasi custom. Lt. Col. P. R. T. Gurdon writes,

"Syntengs seem to have more closely preserved the custom of matriarchate than the Khasis and the Syntengs claim that their 'Niam' or religious ceremonies are purer, i.e., that they more closely correspond to what there were in ancient times than those of the Khasis."

In Kyrim or NongKhrem State, there is a spiritual head, i.e., a high priestess, Ka Siem Sad, responsible for the religious ceremonies of the state. The Siem also performs some such ceremonies. In the case of the high priestess, the succession follows from mother to daughter, failing this to the eldest daughter of the second daughter if there is no daughter of her mother's sister. The Lynngam law of inheritance follows that of the Garo law, i.e., daughter inherits the mother's property. The Pani Koch tribe of Assam are more like the Mech and the Garos. They also follow matriliny. On the death of the mother, the property is divided amongst the daughters. There are several other matriarchal societies in India, particularly in southern India. Amongst the Muppans, the nephew inherits after the death of the maternal uncle. The Nottu Malayans also follow the same rule. The Mukkuvans follow the female line of inheritance. Amongst the Izuvans and the Tiyyans of north Malabar also, the female line of succession is followed. Amongst the Nayars, the property is inherited by the sister's son. In the Variyars society, the inheritance follows the female line. The Pisarotis follow matriarchy. The Murars like the Nayars follow matriarchy. The Kshatriyas follow matriarchal customs. So also the Mappillas in taluk Malabar follow the female line of inheritance.

As in the Garo society, the maternal uncle has a very respectable position and also a command over his sister's family in the Khasi society. Gurdon writes, "A Khasi cannot marry his maternal uncle's daughter during the life time of his maternal uncle. This is probably due to the fact that the maternal uncle or *kni,* in a Khasi household is regarded more in the light of a father than an uncle. His children, however, would belong to the clan of his wife and there would, therefore, in ordinary case be no bar to the nephew marrying one of them....." Gurdon quotes a Khasi saying which runs as follows : "The father bears the heat and burden of the day, the maternal uncle comes when it is the question of life or death." This fact is equally true in the case of the Garos. In many other tribes all over India, the influence of the maternal uncle over the nephews and nieces is distinctly noticeable. Particularly in marriage negotiations, the maternal uncle is almost always an important party. This is a position of obvious influence of the mother in the family according to my views which I shall come to later on.

It is believed by some authorities, viz., Freud, Westermarck and others that matriarchy preceded patriarchy in the history of the evolution of races and of civilization. Nowadays this evolution theory of human social organisation is not accepted by all although there are staunch followers of this view even at the present day.

As things stand now it is very difficult to find positive proof in one particular society in support of or against the above mentioned view. We have no records of thousands of years which have elapsed since the present times. It is more or less on one's own imagination that one has got to depend to find out the missing links in the history of the progress of human civilization. Stray findings from one or the other place have given us but meagre data to enable us to build up any very well founded history of our social evolution. It is not yet definitely known when exactly human life appeared on this earth. Much less is known about the places where human beings first appeared. There is no justification for thinking that only one such group, call it Pithecanthropus or by any other name, came to live in a particular area of this earth and that by gradual evolution and migration this one group gradually spread over different parts of the globe. There is no denying the fact that migration of human beings took place from one place to another at various periods. This does not mean that at the beginning there was only one group of human beings residing in a particular area. On the other hand, it is more probable that different groups of different types of such human beings lived in different places, it may be, at different times. Their descendants were naturally not alike, neither in appearance nor in temperament. It is, therefore, quite likely that in the later days when people gradually evolved social systems, each group developed its own system to meet its own requirements. Some groups under certain circumstances developed matriarchal system while others took to patriarchy. There are, of course, known cases where matriarchy of earlier times gradually changed into partriarchy later on. G. Bose has mentioned such a change over to patriarchal system in the case of the Andhra people in his "Reconstruction of the Andhra Chronology". There may be others as well who have changed from matriliny to patriliny. The aboriginal Hajongs living at the foot of the Garo Hills, in Mymensingh, I am told, formerly inherited through the female line. Now they have fully changed over to the system of inheritance through the male line. This is clearly an effect of cultural contact with the more advanced and more powerful Hindus. Not only this, they are now claiming themselves as Kshatrias while some of them have given up their own method of deity worship and have taken to Brahmin priests,

There is no dearth of such change of customs among the different tribal peoples. In south India, at one time the government had to appoint a commission to find out facts for enacting a new law of inheritance under the changed circumstances.

I have so long mentioned about some other tribes where changes from matriliny to patriliny have taken place. Amongst the Garos who have come down to the planes of Mymensingh and have settled there, the same tendency is clearly noticeable now. Some of them now resent their old custom and follow patriliny in their family. But difficulty arises when a law suit is filed in the court in connection with such an inheritance. Upto the present day, courts have been upholding the matrilineal system in case of the Garos. But I know of many instances occuring amongst our Garo tenants, where the family property was inherited in the male line and neither the females nor the maternal uncle of the lawful heiress raised any objection to it. In the interior of the Garo Hills, however, I have not come across any case of such change to patriarchy. The Garos of the interior region never raised any question about the existing matriarchal system which they consider natural. They seemed to me quite happy with the system and found no difficulty to follow it, except on rare occasions. Those who have been converted to Christianity are now generally following the law of inheritance in the male line. But I have seen Christian Garos who even after conversion to Christianity follow matriliny.

Whether matriarchy is older than patriarchy is, in my opinion, a question which cannot be satisfactorily solved now, when after several thousand years from its origin, we find matriarchy in a decaying state of existence. There is a gradual tendency for matriarhcy to change over to patriarchy. This is more true of the tribes and castes who have come in closer cultural contact with more advanced patriarchal people. Viewing from the psychological standpoint, we have reasons to believe that both matriarchal and patriarchal systems of societies co-existed from the very beginning of development of society. A family may be called as an unit of a society in a specific sense. A family, again, is nothing but a group of individuals tied together either by direct blood connection or by the bond of love or marriage, etc.

We do not know about the nature of group organisation of earlier days before the evolution of well organised social life. Westermarck in his 'History of Human Marriage' has shown the varieties of marriage forms and obligations attached to them. It may be well imagined that the institution of marriage was unknown among the very primitive people who lived on this earth several

thousand years ago. Sex instinct was there among them, as it is in us now. Havelock Ellis has thrown light on this aspect of human life. In Vatsayana's "Kamsutra", we have got a splendid work of sexology. Sex instinct is one of the primary instincts not of the animals alone but also of human beings. Psycho-analysis has shown that the wishes of childhood remain in the full grown adults that the primitive archaic wishes exist in our civilized mind, though mostly in the unconscious. The nature of unconscious wishes are, to some extent, known to the psycho-analysts. From their knowledge, we may try to imagine certain situation although the material data to verify the truth of such a state existing at one time is not always available.

From the psycho-analysis of individual cases, we know that in some the oedipus tendency is stronger than the other tendencies. It is not definitely known, yet, what are the specific causes for the differences of such tendencies in individuals. Generally speaking, these characteristic traits are attributed to two factors, viz., heredity and environment. The question of heredity has not been satisfactorily solved up till now. That environment, i.e., the reality stimulus exerts a very strong influence on the make up of the personality may be accepted without much reservation. It should not be ignored at the same time that the type of nature of the response to stimulus depends, to a great extent, on the hereditary factors. Yet, just as exercise of a particular muscle helps it to develop more than when it is neglected, so also in the case of mental tendencies, one factor may develop more than another due to frequent stimulus being employed. What is true for an individual may, in general, be true for a group of people. If that be a fact, we may presume that in case of a particular group of people, living an isolated life, away from other groups, the influences of the elderly female, the mother image, may have been stronger than in another group where the strong male wielded his authority and maintained the show. Such dominations by the mother image, in course of time, might have become the custom of that group of people. It is common knowledge that, even in these days, customs very often change. Assuming this to be true, we may imagine all sorts of varied groups which may lie in between these two extremes, viz., the purely matriarchal and the patriarchal types.

It will not be out of place to mention some of my personal observations amongst the wild animals. I had the opportunity to study the nature of wild elephants in the Garo Hills. I followed a few herds for several days and observed them under different environments. What is relevant here for us is that in a herd of wild elephants, it was always an elderly female elephant, a *kunki*,

who leads the herd from one place to another. Not only this, at the apprehension of any danger, it is always this female elephant which gives the signal to the other elephants of the herd to collect together for necessary action. There is, of course, deviation from this general rule. When a baby elephant gets frightened at the sight of something or at some sudden sound, it raises the alarm signal, and the mother runs to it with lightning speed. Other elephants also follow suit or at least become alert and wait for the next signal. But at the time of actual fighting against another herd, the father of the herd steps forward and fights out the battle with its adversary which is also a male. At other times this huge male follows the lead of the herd mother, if I may call the female leader of the herd by that name. Living in the same forest, the wild buffalo and hukku (hulluck) are usually led by the male ones. The black buck, living in a herd, usually follows the lead of a male. I have gathered this information from my cousin Maharaja B. C. Sinha who is a keen sportsman with considerable power of observation. I have noticed buzrigars in a cage. Here the bird which did not follow the wishes of the female was discarded by the latter. There are homosexual buzrigars which do not take interest in the female birds. Not only this, it kills the young ones in the nest, if the mother absents herself offering an opportunity for such mischief. Examples may be multiplied but this is not necessary for us.

If we turn from the animals to human societies, we find the same difference existing side by side among the different tribes of Assam. Nagas follow patriarchy while Garos follow matriarchy. If we observe carefully, the same characteristics are noticed in the case of different families. The Hindu Bengali society follows patriarchy as a general rule. In some family, however, the influence of the mother is much stronger than that of the father. As a matter of fact the mother dominates the family, and the father remains the nominal legal head. There are also families in which the opposite is true, and the mother has no place worth mentioning.

In those families where the mother dominates, unless she is too much of an egoist, the members of the mother's parental family, particularly the brothers of the mother, assume a special place. If the father in the family is a man of strong personality the position of the members of the mother's family is comparatively weak. We find similar characteristics in the case of the Garos as well. In the matriarchal family of the Garos, the maternal uncle (mother's brother) has the strongest hold on the children of his sister. He mediates in sister's household difficulties and regulates the conduct of her children. The maternal uncle acts as

the father of his sister's children. Not only this, the maternal uncle, as I have mentioned in connection with the Garo marriage custom, fetches one of his nephews, i.e., the sister's son, to marry his daughter. This relation of the brother and the sister in the Garo society has more than a passing significance. In the early days of his life, i.e., from his boyhood, the male child is removed to a nokpanthe from his parents' house where his sisters live. After the marriage, he usually leaves the village and goes to live with his mother's brother's family, being married to his daughter. In the meantime, the sister is married also. The brother has not much voice over his wife's property or household. So also the sister's husband has no voice over his wife's property. But the brother now exerts his influence over the management of his sister's property and over her children. This nokpanthe custom appears to be an attempt at preventing the possibility of incest between a brother and a sister, but ultimately, the brother becomes an authority in the sister's family in many respects after the sister is married and has issues when the apprehension of actual incest is eliminated. But the brother comes in the picture as the guardian of the sister's children. This is clearly nothing but a fulfilment of the unconscious desire of incest in a social form which has been successful only to put away the actual sexual union between the brother and the sister.

We can take it for granted that the primitive men also had sexual wishes and instincts. It is not known, nor have we any definite proof now to show what were the stages of social organisation through which the different tribes of the world passed to reach to their present position. It is lame to presume anything in the absence of proper data. Biological sex urges brought members of the opposite sex closer, and they remained attached to each other more for passion than for love. The restriction imposed by the institution of marriage to ensure conjugal fidelity is a proof of the existence of the wish for sex enjoyment with more than one sex partner. We have even in this twentieth century quite a number of polygamous as well as polyandrous societies both in India and in some other parts of the world. This being the case now after several thousand years of social development, we can at least imagine the state of affairs when these societies were just in their primary or nuclear stage. Promiscuity may not have been the normal custom amongst all the groups of people then living on earth, but a short term affinity between the partners must have been quite frequent. Even to-day short period marriage system is in vogue in some south Indian tribes. In the family unit, the children, therefore, had to remain more attached to the mother than to the father in certain societies. Biologically as well as

psychologically the child in its earlier stage remains more attached to the mother. It is only by gradual development of the personality and knowledge of reality and by gradual control over the body muscles as also the dawning of interest in varieties of objects other than the mother that a child grows ultimately to a normal adult. Tracing the tendencies of social changes through the ages, it is found that at least some of the matriarchal societies have changed to patriarchy and this process is making a progressive inroad amongst the remaining matriarchal societies who are coming into contact with the present day civilization. It is a remarkable point to note that no matriarchal society could attain the height of civilizaion, nor could it stand the ingress of patriarchy. No instance is known to me of a patriarchal society changing into matriarchy. The present trend of equality of rights of men and women in societies may be due to a compromise between the two inherent tendencies in man, composed of bisexuality very aptly symbolized in the Hindu deity, *Ardhanariswara.* We know of strong father dominated families and also of similarly strong mother dominated families. It is not certain whether the possibility of progress in a strong-father family is more than in a mother dominating family.

We have seen that the available data cannot satisfactorily explain the origin of matriarchy. As selection of the form of society ultimately rests on the gratification of some strong unconscious mental wish in a reality situation, it may be profitable to search for the origin of this institution in the realm of psychology. Freud used the term libido to indicate the psychic sex energy. Bose prefers the term wish as a psychological counterpart of the biological term instinct.

It will be advantageous to describe here in short, the stages of libidinal development. Mainly there are four stages. Firstly, the earliest one is the auto-erotic stage in which only the experience of pleasure and pain are present without any reference to any sense organ or outside object. Next comes the narcissistic stage, where the pleasure or pain is referred to the body itself. The child at this stage becomes body or organ conscious and can ascertain the sense organ responsible for the pleasure or pain. Love for the body is predominant at this stage. Upto this level the libido is engaged mainly with the child itself. In the third stage or the first aloerotic stage, the libido flows towards the mother or her substitute. This is the oedipus level of the libidinal development. The final stage is reached when the libido attaches itself to normal heterosexual objects leaving its oedipus mooring. I have omitted other aspects of this libidinal development to avoid complexity. Freud has used the terms auto-erotic and narcissitic in the same sense. But Bose

differentiates the two stages as I have indicated above. In my opinion, Bose's viewpoint is more psychological. According to him in loving one's own body (narcissism), the body itself is characterised as an object. It cannot, therefore, be auto-erotic and should be classed under aloerotic where the ego and the object are recognised as separate. I need not enter into this controversy here further.

Following the stages of libidinal development described above, one very important fact is revealed. In the auto-erotic and in narcissistic stages, the child is interested more in the self, not caring much for the outside object. In the next stage, wherein lies the root or the first stage of family, the child throws its interest on the mother or her substitute. The mother at this stage dominates the child's mind. Possibly, this fact has a great contribution towards the formation of matriarchal societies. In the next stage, there may be several minor changes in the attitude towards the mother. Theoretically, we should expect corresponding difference in the matriarchal system as well. Possibly, we had it in minor forms. From the big mother image, there is an usual shifting towards younger mother images. We have relics of such a tendency in the matriarchal system of the succession of Siemship and in other societies where the sister's son inherits the property or the leadership in a society. The sister here may be considered as the younger oedipus image. This concept will find support in what has been said about the influence of the brother over the sister's family, when the brother virtually exerts the authority of the father of a patriarchal family. The next stage should be patriarchy proper, i.e., attainment of the fatherhood and a satisfactory solution of the oedipus phase in society. In the intermediary stage, we expect the homosexual domination against the father, and the brother images where the heterosexual components were pushed back within the walls of the household limitation. According to this scheme of social development, the ideal society would be one where the oedipus complex as well as the homosexual complexes have been happily adjusted, i.e., where the male and the female members will work in union without any prejudice or superiority of the one partner against or over the other. This is exactly what psycho-analysis aims at in the case of the treatment of mental patients, viz., adjustment of the complexes. From what has been said about the similarity between the libidinal development and the different forms of social structure one thing becomes clear. It is this that, in the early childhood, there is no question of society formation. The child is then mainly in its auto-erotic or in its narcissistic level where it has practically nothing much to do with the outside world, except satisfaction of hunger and mitigation of

other bodily discomforts. These necessities also are supplied to it by the mother or other elders mainly of their own interest in the child. So the question of maintaining any active relation with others and thought or consideration about others' need hardly come to the child. The next stage is when the child grows up a little and its interest in outside objects develops sufficiently to stimulate him to leave the auto-erotic predominance in favour of aloerotic object love. The mother, then, comes into the picture in full form. We see the hen with her chickens, the she-goat with her young ones always around her. The group lives as an unit. In the life of higher animals, the father also contributes much to the safety and protection of the group. We may refer to the elephant herd again in this connection, and also the black bucks. It is here that we get the true picture of a matriarchal family which, in its turn, may give rise to a matriarchal society. It is inconceiveable that in a matriarchal society none but the females should have authority and command, exclusively, over the society as it is impossible to find a patriarchal society where the female members have no authority in any sphere of their social life. It is, therefore, a question of the general characteristics of the society which we should understand by the words patriarchy and matriarchy. The child grows up gradually, and his education and other trainings, particularly in a primitive society, rest on the male members of the society. In many cases, it is the maternal uncle who is responsible for such training, etc., while in other cases some other village elders take over the charge. Wherever there is a nokpanthe system, much of the tribal custom is learnt there, and training also takes place there. Here is a place which is absolutely outside the mothers influence. In the Garo society, at this stage, the boy avoids closer relation with the mother although the girls remain with her. Among those tribes where there is Noknumel, if I may coin that Garo word to mean the dormitory for the unmarried girls, the girls also go to live in it. But during the day time, they come back to their parents house. While the boys during this stage go out of their mother's influence to a great extent, the girls, however, remain much within her mother's fold. She gradually grows up to start her own family and herself becomes the mother. The boys when they go out of the family ultimately they again yield to the dictates of their wives in a matriarchal society. This organisation is rather complicated and to all appearances the boy temporarily goes out of the mother's influence to come under the influences of the wife. With some modification, this may be said to be true for all human societies. In the matriarchal society, the authority of the wife is similar in many respects to that of a superior mother towards a child. In the patriarchal society, the child gradually goes under the influence of the father or a father's substitute. In practice, it

is the father in the family who introduces the child to the outside world at large. In the primitive human life as well as in the animal world, it is the powerful males who lead the war, fight the outside danger, encourage adventure and mainly help the family in matters of food gathering, etc. On the ability and skill of these grown up males depends the safety and prospect of the society. In the present day world, the patriarchal societies have made greater progress in comparison with the matriarchal societies. I have already mentioned why this should be so. Progress means greater control over nature and outside world and better ability to struggle against odds. In the primitive stage, this means physical strength and skill. Both these are better found in males. These qualities in females are but exceptions. If this view is accepted, it becomes incumbant to accept that patriarchal societies are stronger and more developed than the matriarchal societies. History also corroborates this conclusion. The best matriarchal society of to-day can hardly stand a comparison with the best patriarchal society in its material attainments. It is inherent in the constitution of a matriarchal society that it cannot prosper beyond a certain limit. The masculine wishes to be the father, i.e., to dominate, eventually becomes stronger. While the feminine wishes to become a mother, with the wish to receive indicates a depending tendency of the women on the men. It is curious to mention that due to culture contact the Garos in the plains are trying to take to patriarchal system of inheritance but there is no tendency on the part of a patriarchal society to change to matriarchy. I have stated that Bose has mentioned in his paper that the Andhra Kingship in Ancient India changed from matriarchy to patriarchy. In the case of certain south Indian tribes also, this tendency gives rise to such a conclusion. I have noticed this in some Garo families in the interior of the hills. Some grown up males, now Christian, have developed the tendency to demand authority of spending the money they earn by themselves. I think the way of life and teaching of the missionaries and the life which those who went out to join labour corps during the last two wars saw in other places, i.e., superiority of the male people, and the constant contact with the neighbouring societies had a definite influence towards their present tendency of patriarchal authority over the family.

Viewing from the standpoint of libidinal development, it may be said that the matriarchal society indicates an earlier level than the patriarchal society. This does not mean that every society has a matriarchal history, known or unknown. It is quite possible that a particular group of people did not live long in the mother influence level to organise matriarchal society but passed on to patriarchal stage where an organised society building was possible. But

in the case of some groups, the mother fixation level might have given rise to a form of society better known as a matriarchal society. It is easily conceiveable that at a given period of time both matriarchal and patriarchal societies were there in the past, as we find them exist now. But if our argument and understanding of the problem be correct, then we may predict that a time will come when there will remain no matriarchal society on earth. On the other hand in the patriarchal societies also, the position of women will be much improved, and the males and the females will enjoy equal status in the society. The present tendency indicates that individual ownership may gradually pass away to give rise to co-operative ownership. The question of inheritance in its ultimate stage may then loose its significance. But this is only a speculation.

So long I have been dealing with the question mainly from the psychological standpoint. There may be other points which may be taken into consideration in this connection.

Firstly, it may be presumed that, in the earlier days, the male people were occupied with war activities which demanded their attention more for the protection of the village or of the group. For this purpose, it may be supposed that they had but little time for other social activities. But this is on the one hand imagining things too extreme. There is no justification for this assumption that a tribe had to fight against another tribe constantly. Apprehension of outside attacks might have been there, and a sort of preparedness also could be conceived. But it is not clear why under such conditions the males should not be the guiding force of the society. The older people being unsuited for war, and other rough outdoor life, very likely stayed in the village. It may be argued that they could have assumed the authoritative role to guide and to look after the village social organisation.

The same argument will hold good in the case of the assumption that hunting expeditions to distant places for food gathering purposes demanded frequent absence of the able bodied adult males from the village. This cannot be taken for granted to be a valid ground for matriarchal system of society. Besides that, there are tribes in Deccan (South India) who are strictly vegetarian. Food gathering for them should have been easier.

Another possibility is promiscuity in a particular society. This would give rise to the difficulty of ascertaining the father of the child. Although there is promiscuity in many tribes even at the present day, this cannot be considered as a valid ground for the

introduction of the matriarchal system of society. In many tribes of the Bihar, Orissa, Chotonagpur and south India and among some Assam tribes, free sex intercourse takes place among unmarried boys and girls particularly among those tribes who have bachelors' dormitory system. I have discussed this point in the chapter under Nokpanthe. When such promiscuity results in pregnancy, the girl is given in marriage with the boy who is supposed to be the mischief maker. Apart from this in polyandrous societies, matriarchy is not necessarily followed. We may refer to the Todas and Kammalans and other castes of south India, and also some tribes in Assam bordering the Himalayan ranges. Most of these polyandrous societies are not matriarchal societies. On the other hand, most of them follow patriarchy. The question of inheritance is solved by the declaration of name of one of the husbands by the wife to be the father of the child or some other custom for determining the father is adopted. If this could be considered sufficient for the purpose of inheritance in some societies, there can be no reason why for this reason alone some people should take to matriarchy. Frazer in his memorable work, 'Totemism and Exogamy', mentions that the central Australian tribes do not know the connection between sexual intercourse and progenition. They believe that the spirit of the dead enters the body of the women, either married or unmarried, when they pass by the place marked out by them as the resting place of the spirits of the dead. It is mentioned that if the young and fat women who do not like to be pregnant, pass by such a place they usually bend low to walk like old women and declare that being old they should not be disturbed. Among some of the Andaman tribes, there is similar ignorance of the relation between sex and procreation. It is not possible to say definitely whether there was similar ignorance on this point among the Garos. Far more difficult it will be to generalise this ignorance in the case of all the tribes or rather to presume this ignorance in the past on the part of every tribe. But for our speculative consideration one thing will appear probable. If this sex relation and progenition factor be unknown, the question of fatherhood, as it is conceived in the more cultured societies of today, could not arise. So the children must have to take to the totem or the clan of the mother. The role of mother in child birth cannot be overlooked under any circumstances. This might have contributed to some extent to the accruing of the maternal right in a certain society. But this cannot be the only factor effecting this form of social organisation. It can be imagined that the male person who used to look after the protection of and supply of food to the mother and her children, could happily become the authoritative head of the family. As a matter of fact these Australian and the Andaman tribes mentioned above do not follow matriarchy

although they are ignorant about the relation between sexual coitus and pregnancy.

The argument that in the earlier days the primitive people did not know the relation between sexual coitus and pregnancy or child birth mainly because of the long interval between the act and its result and that they had no clear idea of cause and effect in such cases seems to be a strained reasoning. Even if we accept this argument, there can be no reason why a woman could not have selected one from her sex partners to be the father of the child as is found to be the practice in some polyandrous societies, already mentioned. It is also doubtful whether the primitive people at that stage of social evolution had anything much to inherit. Of course, matriarchy is not necessary for inheritance of property alone. More important question is the social organisation as a whole. The question of inheritance in case of more than one daughter in a family is determined by selection of one daughter as Nokna (heiress) in the Garo society. Inheritance in all cases might have been solved in the same manner of selection. Matriarchy or matriliny, therefore, cannot be considered as an outcome of the situation aforesaid. A problem may be solved in very many ways. It is the psychic factor which determines and accepts one solution in preference to the other. Environment only helps to give a definite shape or form to the inner unconscious wishes. This is found to be true also in actual analysis of the psycho-neurotics.

Considering these and also certain other minor probabilities, I have come to this conclusion that external realities might be considered as only contributory factors in bringing a matriarchal society into existence but the main and the basic force must be sought in the psychological field more correctly in the unconscious mental motivation of an individual at the first stage and then in a group of people and ultimately in the particular society. This factor gradually formed its footing and gathered strength to become a social custom. We see nowadays matriarchal societies where people accept the matriarchal system only as a custom which they do not follow scrupulously. Eventual accumulation of tension in the individuals of the society may ultimately change its character in the long run. Indications of such digressions from the age old trodden tracks are now found also amongst the Garos.

CHAPTER VIII

Totemism

Schmidt in his book "The Origin and Growth of Religion" says, "Totemism is an enigmatic phenomenon and depends on the belief of certain peoples that their families and clans stand in a definite blood relationship to particular species of animals."

McLennan first showed that totemism was not only a religion but was one from which various beliefs and practices of the people were received. Totemism plays an important role in the evolutionary theories of Lubbock, Tylor, Spencer and others.

Frazer collected the data of totemism from different tribes and castes of the world. He first thought that totemism was a half religious and a half social phenomenon. Later on, he changed the word 'religious' to 'magical' and finally says, "The theory that in the history of mankind religion has been preceded by magic is confirmed inductively by the observation that among the aborigins of Australia the rudest savage as to whom we possess accurate information, magic is universally practised whereas religion in the sense of propitiation or conciliation of the higher powers seems to be nearly unknown." He further says, "Pure totemism is not in itself a religion at all, for the totems as such are not worshipped, they are in no sense deities they are not propitiated with prayer and sacrifice. To speak, therefore, of a worship of totems, pure and simple, as some writers do, is to betray a serious misapprehension of the facts."

Frazer defines a totem "as a class of material objects which a savage regards with superstitious respect, believing that there exists between him and every member of the clan an intimate and altogether special relation". According to him "the totem object is generally an animal, less frequently a plant and rarely an inanimate object, and the rarest of all an artificial object or an artifact".

Totemism exists in Australia, Melanasia, North America, Africa and India, as indicated by Frazer.

In India, totemism exists among many tribes and castes of Travancore, Cochin, Mysore, Madras and Assam.

In my paper on the "Clan Formation of the Garos", I mentioned 250 names of sub-clans. A glance at the list will show the totemistic origin of the sub-clans.

Majority of the names have been taken from the fauna or flora of the locality. Only a few have taken names of mountains, caves, streams, etc. In very rare cases, the name of commodities in common use has been included in the sub-clans name of the tribe.

I tried to find out from the Garos their feeling and belief regarding totemistic objects. According to some of them, the clan people actually traced their origin from the object from which they took their name. Although most of these totem names were from the fauna or flora or some phenomena of the locality, as I have already mentioned, I enquired how human being could have been born of such objects. The common reply of such question was that in the older days it could be possible but now such a thing is not likely to happen. According to other groups, the origin of the clan was unknown but they admitted there was some sort of relationship between the totem and the people of its clan. According to yet another group, some people simply took a fancy for certain objects and started to call themselves by that name. The last group was totally ignorant of the origin of the phenomenon. They said, "This comes down to us from the distant past."

The three clans, namely, the Shangma, the Marak and the Momin, are exogamous divisions which are believed to have been created originally for facility of marriage. The creation of the sub-clans under each of these clans appears to be incongruous with the proposition of exogamy. For a member of a sub-clan under the Shangma clan cannot ordinarily marry a member of another sub-clan under the same clan. The purpose of sub-clan formation, therefore, is not directly connected with exogamous system of the Garo society. In the recent days, marriage between the members of two different sub-clans under the same clan is taking place although very rarely. The Garos, however, do not encourage such marriage in their society. The persons thus married are not treated as outcastes. They may be asked to pay a fine for this act. The amount of fine is not heavy.

Regarding the relation of the totem with its members, it is necessary to mention that the Garos observe no special respect for the totem nor do they use the totem on any ceremonial occasions. They do not seem to attach now much value to the totem. This remark holds good in a very general way. There are people among the Garos who will hesitate to destroy a tree bearing the name

of his sub-clan. I found the Garos of Nokrek sub-clan feeling a sort of uncanny hesitation to climb the range of the same name. In certain cases, a vague idea as to some evil consequences resulting from injury to or disregard for the totem was faintly noticeable. In my paper referred to above, I have tried to show the influence of factors working as a motive force for the reformation of exogamous clan. Freud also has come to the conclusion that it originated from the dread of incest felt by savage tribes.

Frazer in his two books 'Totemism and Exogamy' and 'Totemica' has mentioned the existence of totemism in different tribes of the different countries of the world. Totemism in varied forms is a common feature among most of the tribes and castes of the world. Frazer has strongly emphasised that totemism and exogamy are two different institutions which should never be confused and considered as one and the same thing. Exogamy follows the totemic culture. Considering from the psycho-analytical point of view, Freud has come to the conclusion that the totem stands as the father image of the clan people on whom the ambivalent tendency of the members of the clan finds its expression. But he has not traced the origin of such totem formation. Theories about the origin of totemism so far advanced by some of the workers are rather superficial. Some people think that, in earlier days, people took the names of animals for themselves. This gradually served as a totem to their progenies. Frazer himself thinks that totemism was primarily meant to ensure food supply and control over harmful natural phenomenon, etc.

Other workers have confused the issue and have simply argued that totemism was necessary to maintain exogamy so as to avoid incest. Freud also mentions about the fear of incest on the part of aboriginals. This is no doubt true that incest is looked down upon in every society with the exception of the Pharoas of Egypt. The fear of incest is prominent among the Garos also. It should not be overlooked that in many cultured or civilised societies some form of totemistic exogamy exists even in the present day, as for example the Hindu Brahmins follow *gotra* exogamy rigidly.

Even if we accept that the main object of the totemic groups is to maintain exogamy, questions arise (i) why a totem should be necessary for that purpose, (ii) why a totem should in any case be any thing else than a human being and that also (iii) not a single object but a class as a whole of a particular kind of animal, plant, etc. For example, it is not one particular *dotleng* (parrot) which a Garo of the clan of the same name considers to be his totem, but all the birds of the dotleng class are considered as his totem. I have

mentioned that the Garos do not follow totemism very rigidly. Yet they feel the tie in some mysterious way between them and their totem. The three questions raised above are not easy to answer. The Garos say, *"Hagelsakona indakisha"*, i.e., it was so from the very beginning. Possibly, it is futile to attempt to find the real answer from them.

The origin of totemism in many cases lies in the long past. But I have mentioned in the paper on "Clan Formation of the Garos" that it is my belief that the Garos change their sub-clan, i.e., their *mahari* names according to their choice. There is reason to believe that such changes have taken place in comparatively recent days. But they could not give me any explanation other than saying that new maharis have come into existence. No one appeared to me to know much about the origin and formation of new mahari. I have indicated in the same paper the probable situations under which an individual may change his identity. I have also mentioned that there may arise situations to justify separation out of a common group. Yet there always remains an affinity between the two separated groups. This tie may be suppressed, and the hostility may appear on the surface. Still as we find in analysis of patients, in the deeper unconscious there is always found an ambivalent tendency towards the object of either love or hate. From the psychoanalytical standpoint, if, for any reason, the tension is hightened, a time may come when the individual breaks his relation with the other members of the group. This may happen for several reasons. Apart from material causes, the psychological wish to assume an authoritative role, if manifested in the group may give rise to conflicts and disruption. The individual may then try separation from the old surroundings and to establish his own group elsewhere. The breaking up of a big joint family may be considered in this connection. For any reason, when this happens the affected person goes over to some other place to settle together with the other members of his own group. The change of clan name in such a situation is justifiable and is easily understood.

The question of the choice of new name then comes up for consideration. This phenomenon may be better understood if we, for a moment, take into consideration certain psychological behaviour of normal people. Certain facts in the behaviour of normal persons who entertain certain peculiar beliefs can be noticed. Amongst the students there is a very common tendency to over value a certain pen and to believe that if the examination papers are written with that particular pen the result will be good. Some people believe a certain dress to be more auspicious than others. Such examples may be multiplied. The question, therefore, arises why a parti-

cular object assumes such an importance which, as a material object it does not possess. A closer analysis will at once reveal the emotional aspect which is dominent in such cases. It is not the material value that is raised but the subjective value that is foisted upon the object. Such subjective over valuation cannot take place under ordinary daily setting. Some sort of emotionally unstable condition is necessary to bring about this over valuation. In students during the examination when the uncertainty of the achievement looms large, and also there exists a strong desire for success the tension that is created gives rise to anxiety. In psycho-analytical terms, we may say that the libidinal tension gives rise to an anxiety situation in the psyche. Under the strain of such a situation, at times, some very petty objects may appear to be dependable and assume the role of some thing like a saviour or a helpful friend. It has been my experience with the psycho-neurotic patients that a particular type of touch or vision having a deeper significance in the unconscious of the individual at once assumes an exaggerated importance. When one goes out in a situation charged with the excess of emotion to meet a person the tramway ticket which may be kept in the hand assumes such an importance that when one throws the ticket away one may feel insecure and lonely, and a sort of helplessness may come over him. The grip on the ticket helps him to have the grip on the situation which he is about to face. Like the tramway ticket, a pen, a particular dress, or even a particular place or any other object, for some unconscious reasons, may assume such importance in the individual's life. In psycho-neurotic patients, due to the ambivalent tendency towards the parent image, the patient's hate may cause a break with the parents. But the feeling of love for them also being present, anxiety develops for the actions perpetrated due to hate. The patient seeks some atonement and conciliation with the parents. He may come to a compromise with the parents or may take to a helpful parental image and submit to him and be relieved from his anxiety. The punishing and the helping aspects of the parents are thus separated and vested in two or more objects. He can now feel assured of the help from the sympathetic parental image when the hostile father's or the mother's punishment is apprehended. That brings relief of his anxiety to a great extent.

We may now come back to our consideration of the psychological causes which might have given rise to totemism. Due to actual conflict or possibility of conflict with the group authorities, certain individuals may break away from the group to start an independent living. The same ambivalence and the same conflict in the unconscious of the individual as mentioned before may now crave for some form of sympathetic parent substitute. We have seen how, at

times, an insignificant object may be charged with subjective emotional over valuation, i.e., the object is then considered as the possessor of mysterious powers and values. The selection of such objects is not the result of an well calculated and thought out plan. It is something like love at first sight, i.e., the object is one towards which the pent up emotion for some reason or other is irrevocably directed. It is my experience that in matters of such selection the psycho-neurotic patients usually depend more on their visual or tactual aspects. A particular type of tactual or visual sensation only meets with the unconscious need at the moment.

Broadly speaking, this has some similarity with the mechanism of magic, belief and superstition formation. I may mention about the origin of one such superstitious belief. As far as I remember, it was an incident which took place in the winter of 1925 or 1926. We obtained permission from the Assam Government to capture wild elephants in the Garo Hills. From October, three stokades were constructed in different sectors of the hills. We were living in tents on the sand bed of rivers. All possible efforts to catch elephants met with failure till about the middle of February next. Expenditure mounted up gradually but there was no prospect of any return up till that time. We were naturally disappointed, and a sense of frustration seized us. We were moving from place to place. During our stay in the hills, we could not shoot any good game either birds or animals. One day, we were shifting out tent from one sand bed of Simsang (Someswari) river to another. We pinned our dugout boats near a sand bed on the right side of the river. It was afternoon. Soon we stepped on the sand bed. My cousin, Maharaja B. C. Sinha, saw some red specks near the north-end of the sand bed. He skilfully approached there with his gun and bagged a beautiful wild cock. He at once shouted, " Success, now we shall be successful in capturing elephants." This exclamatory prediction really proved true. The same night three elephants were stockaded. Our jubilation can be well imagined. Since then it became a superstitious belief with most of the members of the party that unless the tent is pitched on the sand bed on the right hand side of the river and a game be bagged, preferably a wild fowl, there will be no success in shikar or similar other operations in the hills. This belief is still in vogue. It is to be noted that the tension that was hanging over the party at the time was relieved by catharsis by the successful bagging of the game. This brought relief to the ego, and this situation was stamped in the psyche as a good omen.

The totems may be broadly divided into two groups. In one group, the totems are either animals or other living objects, or

some other objects which are perishable. In the other group are found natural phenomena like storm or an object such as a hill, a river, etc. In the case of the first group, usually it is not any one particular object but all the objects of that class are considered as the totem. For example, the Garos of the dotleng (parrot) totem do not consider one specific parrot as their totem but each and every green parrot of a particular class is considered as totem. So also for khokshi or fishbasket totem, etc.

Under the other group, only one particular hillock or river is considered as a totem, e.g., Nokrek (hill), Simsang (river), Baloa storm), etc. I think that owing to the unconscious desire to perpetuate the existence of the helpful parental images this determination is effected.

It is, therefore, the apprehension of danger associated with the unconscious sense of punishment from the parental image on the one hand and a wish to depend on the helpful protector on the other, which give rise to the totem formation. The totem in this sense is but a symbol of either the sympathetic male or the female parent. There are different degrees of identification and projection phenomena in connection with the totem. This explanation of the mechanism of totem formation fits in better at least in the case of the Garos than any other existing theory.

CHAPTER IX

Nokpanthe

I have already mentioned that the Garo boys near about the age of seven or eight years are sent to nokpanthe, i.e., the bachelors' dormitory of the village. Nok means house, and panthe means young bachelor. A spinister is known as the numel. This nokpanthe is a specially built house which is found in almost all the fairly big sized villages in the hill. In smaller villages, there is no nokpanthe, and the bachelors live either with their parents or they live in the house of a widower old man. When they have to live in their parents' house their sleeping place is allotted to a separate corner from where his parents and others of the family rest in the night.

The construction of the nokpanthe is a little different from that of the ordinary living family nok. The special feature of this construction is that it is very strongly built and is usually much larger than the dwelling family houses. There is no side walls of this nokpanthe from the front upto about the half of its length. Only the rear half of the construction has side walls connected with the backside wall. The front side is kept open without any wall. Huge timber posts are often used in the construction of the nokpanthe. These posts as also the cross beams are decorated with colour or carved designs. Human figures both male and female, mostly with their exposed genitals, and figures of animals like tiger, hog, reptiles, are carved out on the posts and beams (see photograph). I have already mentioned that this is strictly prohibited in a family dwelling house. Such decorations are special features of a nokpanthe. The other features of the construction are similar to the family noks of the Garos.

In the Garo village, there is nokpanthe only for the boys of the village. There is no such special hut for Garo spinisters. The Garo unmarried girls of the family live with their parents in the family house. The village nokpanthe is not only the dwelling house of adult unmarried males but a guest or a stranger who may come to the village is also given shelter there. A stranger is not allowed to sleep in a family house. The nokpanthe is also used as the court room where the Nokma or the Laskar holds his court if he so likes. He may as well hold his court in open place in the village.

I have already mentioned in short how the young bachelors live in this nokpanthe. One may hear the krum (a variety of Garo drum) at the dead of night from the nokpanthe. Gonda (a variety of Garo song) is often sung by the inmates of nokpanthe. The boys who are competent to join help their parents in the outdoor work. Usually, they give their earnings to their mother's family till they are married. After marriage, they leave the nokpanthe and either settle in the house of their mother-in-law or they build a separate house of their own. After marriage, if the son comes to visit the mother's village he may either live in the family house or may sleep in the nokpanthe according to his desire. During the nokpanthe life, an adult male is not allowed to enter the house of his mother, except for the purpose of taking his meals or of attending ceremonial functions when he goes inside the mother's house. Under such circumstances, he takes particular care not to touch any of the belongings of his sister, particularly her rikhing (linen garment). It is a marang to touch the rikhing of a female member other than that of the wife. This is very strictly observed, and the rikhing of the sister and mother is scrupulously avoided. A panthe does not stay long in his mother's house after finishing his meals. He seldom speaks to his sister nor does the sister speak to him unless necessity demands.

This nokpanthe system is an institution by itself. Although the nokpanthe system of the Garos is not very well organised as in the case of Ao Nagas of Assam where there are strict age group system and prescribed division of duty for the inmates or in the case of the Juangs of Orissa yet it serves very useful purpose in the Garo society.

It is necessary to understand the purpose of such an institution in the make up of the tribal system. The bachelors' dormitory system is not an exclusive feature of the Garo society.

I have already mentioned that the Nagas of Assam and the Juangs of Orissa have the same form of dormitory in their villages.

The dormitory system is a common feature among many other tribes of India although its nature and character differ from place to place and from tribe to tribe. Each such tribe has its own name for this dormitory. Some tribes have separate dormitories for the boys and for the girls of the village. Some tribes have the system of housing the boys and girls in the two rooms of the same building. Usually, there is a communicating door in the partition wall in such cases. There are also dormitories used by certain tribes where the boys and girls live in the same room.

Nokpanthe

Nokpanthe post carving

Nokpanthe post carving

Excepting those who have the joint boys and girls dormitories, it is a common custom as in the case of the Garos that no woman should enter the dormitory of the boys. In the absence of detailed records, I cannot say whether it is the general rule in other places to prohibit the entry of boys in the dormitory of the girls.

Certain tribes do not build separate houses for such dormitories but leave the rear room of their hut for the use of the bachelor members. Among some tribes, the bachelors go to live with an old widower, and the unmarried girls live in the house of an elderly woman who may be a widow. From the very well organised dormitory system to this loosely knit system, there are various forms of dormitory to be found in different tribes of India. From the available records, it would seem that this system is gradually losing grounds among certain tribes. It should be mentioned that this dormitory system is not a special feature of some tribes of India alone. Such dormitories for the bachelors and the unmarried girls are to be found in different parts of Melanesia, Australia, Burma, Malay, Africa, and traces of such institution are found in Japan, China, South America and even in some of the European countries.

An institution which has such a wide range of existence among the tribal people of various countries of the world and which is found in many civilized societies at the present day, must have some important significance. Apart from the anthropological and the social reasons, there must be deeper psychological significance of such an institution which has continued to exist through generations.

Col. Gurdon is of opinion that the bachelors' dormitory system of the Lynngam tribe of Assam is " ..... a custom of the Thibeto-Burman tribes in Assam and is not a Khasi institution." It is true no such dormitory system exists in the Khasi society, as in the neighbouring tribe of the Garo. I have already mentioned about the wide prevalence of this system in different parts of India and in other countries of the world. This feature, therefroe, cannot be justifiably called a Thibeto-Burman character. Mr. S. C. Roy and Col. Dalton who worked amongst the tribes of Bihar and Orissa (India) say that "Bihar and Orissa are the classic home in India of the village dormitory though the advance of civilization has largely destroyed it."

The Garos cannot say why the panthe or the young bachelors are compelled to go out of the family house to live in a nokpanthe. They say (i) it is the *niam* (custom) from the very beginning,

some say (ii) "will they sleep with their mother and sister?", yet ohters say (iii) "now they are grown up so they must live in the nokpanthe".

The Asur tribes of Orissa believe that this system has been evolved with the idea of not disturbing the intimate life of the parents. It may be generally stated that in almost all the dormitories of Bihar or Orissa as also in certain parts of Travancore and Cochin States the sexual life is very loose. The boys mix with the girls more or less freely. There are various gradations of sex indulgence in different tribes. Some tribes officially follow strict prohibition in premarital sexual union whereas others allow free sex indulgence between boys and girls. Some tribes indulge in promiscuous sex enjoyment in the dormitories. It is the belief of some people that three or four consecutive sexual coitus with the same girl causes impotency. So they frequently change partners. Amongst some, it is the custom with the girls of the dormitory to send invitations to the boys of the dormitory for sexual intercourse. In most of the tribes, where there is dormitory system, there is opportunity of sexuality between the boys and the girls. There is no doubt that this sex factor plays a very important role in the origin of the dormitory system. The sex approach between members of the same family or clan is restricted. To insure this, the boys and in some places the girls as well are sent away from the family to live in a dormitory under an elderly guardian of the same sex. This guardian is a nominal head. The inmates of the dormitory enjoy full freedom in some cases but in the case of some other tribes this guardian assumes a very authoritative position, particularly in matters of sex. In my opinion, the age group or the occupation group system in the dormitory or for that matter any social responsibility placed on the inmates of the dormitory is but a later growth, having much similarity with the secondary elaboration of the dream contents. It may be considered as a rationalisation and an attempt to derive the best possible result out of this system for the social benefit. The age group and the occupation group of the dormitory system of the Nagas may be mentioned again in this connection.

In the nokpanthe of the Garos, I could not trace any free sex indulgence which is commonly found in some Bihar or Orissa tribes. The Garos seem to guard very strictly against any possible sexual union between the boys and girls of the same family. The resentful answer, "Will they sleep with their mother and sister?" given by some of the Garos to my enquiry regarding the necessity of a nokpanthe is also indicative of the same conclusion. Clan exogamy is strictly followed by almost all the tribes. It is,

Nokpanthe beam carving

Nokpanthe beam carving

therefore, natural for them to guard against any infringement of this law. As a matter of fact, severe punishment was meted out to the offender in such cases in the past. Nowaday, the severity of the punishment has diminished considerably.

Another point which should be mentioned in this connection is that although premarital sexual liberty is accepted in some tribal societies, post-marital fidelity of the husband and wife is very rigorously observed. Any violation of such fidelity is socially ostracised and heavily penalised. In the Garo society also, the same custom of punishing the offence of conjugal infidelity is in vogue. They do not allow free sex intimacy between a man and a woman not united by marital ties. This is a social offence for which the mothers of the boys and the girls are to pay fines to the mother's family of the other partner, and they are also to provide a feast to the villagers. If not barred by social custom, the boy and the girl in such cases are forced to marry each other.

After great difficulties I have been able to gather from only a few persons that in spite of such strict social barriers and natural difficulties, the adult boys of the nokpanthe enjoy sex intimacy with girls whenever any such opportunity occurs. But this practice is not openly tolerated by the society. Strict privacy has to be maintained regarding any relation of this nature. But homosexuality is practised more or less in the nokpanthe now.

From these and other similar facts, it may be presumed that the bachelors' dormitory system primarily serves two purposes. Firstly, in certain tribes it helps to select the life's partner. Secondly, in some other tribes as in the case of the Garos its main aim is to safeguard against the probable oedipus situation or incest. The remarks of the Garos already mentioned on this point may be again considered in this connection.

It may be argued that the selection of the life's partner could very well have been made even without the help of the dormitory system. Boys and girls could have been given the same facility to mix and enjoy sex before their final selection. This practice is more or less in existence in most of the western countries where marriage by courtship is in vogue. So this cannot be considered as the cardinal point for the introduction of the dormitory system. I have already mentioned that in most of the societies, the dormitory life is not utilised for the training of community service or for other educational purposes. In the few tribes where such trainings are imparted certain responsibilities for the welfare and protection of the village are delegated to the inmates of the

domitory. In my opinion, these functions are later developments of this institution. The argument that avoidance of the primal scene is the main purpose of the dormitory cannot be a valid one because of the fact that the boys live with their parents upto the age of seven or eight years. They have ample opportunity to witness the parental coitus during this long period.

The fundamental factor, therefore, in connexion with the dormitory system both in the case of boys and girls is the same, namely, prevention of the probable oedipus or incest in the society. It should be borne in mind that in the Garo society boys upto seven or eight years live with their parents, after which they are sent to the nokpanthe. This age correspondes with the sex consciousness of the boys. We again come to the same conclusion that is the cultural development of the Garos their unconscious oedipus and incest wishes are comparatively strong.

CHAPTER X

Marang

The concept of the Garo term Marang is a very complex one. From their frequent utterance of this word and from their attitude of restraint in respect of certain behaviour and action, I thought marang was the corresponding Garo word for *mana* or taboo. On further enquiry and after carefully noting the use of this word, it occured to me that marang had also other connotations than taboo. I shall describe briefly the different senses in which I was able to note the use of this word.

Literal meaning of marang is blood. By marang is meant the person who is capable of shedding the blood of any other person without any hesitation. Such persons are looked upon by the society as extremely dangerous and unholy. At heart, people look upon such persons spitefully but they behave with them with respect out of fear. In this sense, marang is more a horror than any thing else. But I have mentioned that only a few years ago, the Garos were a head hunting people. The possessor of a large number of human skulls was honoured and respected by the society. The post-mortem rituals of the Garos also indicate that their custom demanded killing human beings whose Mimang i.e., the spirits would serve the spirit of the dead in the Mimang land. Although they used to perform a purifying ceremony known as Marang Harikka after their return from a head hunting raid or bloody feud, yet no such ceremony was necessary after killing a person to celebrate the death rites. The concept of a marang as mentioned before, therefore, does not hold good in this case. A red cloth is called *bara marang* but it has no sense of evil or danger associated with it (c.f. results of colour preference test).

The expression *Marang dakka* literaly means committed a marang. In this sense, the word refers to some act which is considered sinful and the person committing this act an evil doer. For example, if a married man has sexual intercourse with a woman either married or unmarried other than his own wife, he is considered to have committed a marang. So also if a male person touches the rikhing, i.e., the linen (except a new one) which the Garo women wear, he commits a marang. Here it has some similarity with the sense conveyed by the word taboo. Sexual adultery is unlawful. Indulgence in such acts is looked upon as crime against

the society, as any other anti-social or unlawful act is considered as a social crime. Sexual violations besides being crimes are also considered as marang. Theft, for instance, is unlawful but it is not a marang. For unlawful acts, the doer is punished according to the provisions of the penal code be it statutory or customary. For marang, they offer sacrifices and observe other rituals. To commit marang, therefore, is not always a crime against law but against some mysterious evil power which needs appeasement.

I had occasions to see sacrifices and rituals in connection with marang. It is a very elaborate and prolonged worship, usually performed near the bank of a river or rivulet at early dawn. I had to pay a penalty once for committing a marang. It was in the interior of the hills near the central ridge when one day as I was passing along a forest foot track I came near a place wherefrom a stench was coming out. It was past noon, and the sun was already behind the high peaks of the hill. I thought it must be from a kill somewhere near our track. One of the porters said in a low voice *Ha Namja* which literally means "the earth is bad" meaning that the place was bad. I enquired from my guide whether this bad smell was coming from a rotten carcass of an animal which might have been killed by a tiger. The mere mentioning of the tiger by me was considered by the others that I had committed a marang. Those who could hear my question all at once resented it and asked me not to talk but to bypass the place silently and quickly. I thought they were afraid of tiger which might jump upon them if I mentioned the name of tiger. I walked briskly and silently and passed the place so as not to hurt their feeling. When we had gone a considerable distance from that place, the head porter and the guide told me that I had committed a marang, and I would have to pay a fine. I paid the amount they asked for. The guide performed some sort of worship with eggs and a green pigeon which I had shot on my way. After a long discussion with them, I came to learn that it was a marang because I had mentioned the name of the tiger which had killed a person only two days ago whose skeleton lay near our track. They had gathered this information about the incident from the villagers of the last village we passed about two hours ago. It was their idea that the tiger was somewhere near about and my uttering of its name could provoke it to kill some one of the party. In this sense, a marang appears to be an apprehension of some sort of danger which might befall them unawares. I have also come across the belief amongst the Garos that if a tiger kills a cow or a human being, it stays there for one or two nights and then moves over to a distant place ; but it must come back to this place of the kill within fifteen days with the expectation of more prey being available. The fear of the tiger is

responsible for all these ideas. I may mention in this connection that amongst the people of the plains, in the neighbourhood of the Garo Hills, a belief is current that in the forest one invites trouble by pointing one's finger to locate the presence of a tiger anywhere nearby. The supposed apprehension is that any one doing so will be attacked by the tiger which gets annoyed at the pointer.

It will not be out of place to mention another incident when I had to pay fine for committing a marang. It was long before I started my field work in collecting data in the Garo Hills. We had secured the permission from the Assam Government to capture wild elephants in the Garo Hills in the year 1923-26. Once I went to see the progress of the work of the stockade construction. I was discussing with the group leaders of the coolies. The stockade was in its preliminary stage. Only a few posts were placed in the shape of a hexagon. The space in between the posts was still open. I walked inside the hexagonal area of the stockade when the Sardar (the headman) and two other group leaders came running and stood in front of me in an agitated condition. They shouted out and told me something in Garo language which I could not understand. For I did not know that language then, except only a few words. They demanded Rs. 100 as fine from me to be paid then and there. I tried to explain my ignorance, but in vain. I had committed a marang, I now understand, in entering the stockade-area by the side wing without entering it through the main doorway. My entrance by the side wing meant to them that either the wild elephants would not come to the stockade by the proper track and thus would not be captured, or that the captured elephants would manage to break the stockade and run away thus making their efforts a failure. I had only Rs. 10 in my pocket then. I paid that amount and promised to pay them Rs. 15 more when I would go back to my camp in the evening. After discussions amongst themselves, they agreed to my proposal and directed me to go back to the camp immediately so that they might get the money soon to purchase fowls and goats, etc., to be sacrificed early next morning. Ignorance of law is of no excuse.

Another Garo expression is *marang ongjok* literally meaning "it has been a marang". Such expressions refer to certain situations or happenings which are considered as ill omen, or indicator of some future evil. As an example I may mention that if a cock crows from the house top in the evening or if a hen crows like a cock it is considered as marang. The owner of the house performs certain rituals and offers sacrifices, etc., so that nothing untoward may happen to the inmates of the house. From the psycho-analytical point of view, such a situation symbolically means oedipus

coitus. From my experience in the treatment of mental patients, I have found this symbol holding good in their cases as well. If we accept this meaning of the above situation, then oedipus sexuality is a marang. Elsewhere I have mentioned that the Garos marry their mother-in-law after the death of their father-in-law and that they have issues by such union. The nok (house) belongs to the mother and is inherited by the nokna, a selected daughter after the death of the mother. Cattle, fowls, etc., are their children in the psycho-analytical sense. The cock is the son, and nok is the mother's body. The cock on the nok then indicates direct oedipus or incest situation which as I have mentioned the Garos try to avoid. It is one of their strongest psychic tendency. But the unconscious oedipus fixation being stronger, it finds expression in the legalised marriage of the mother-in-law in the Garo society. There are many other incidents which are considered as marang, e.g., if in a *jumang,* i.e., a dream, they see a gentleman, other than a Garo, coming to the village either by boat or otherwise, it is a marang. If they see blood in a dream, it is marang. I have discussed their fear of the blood under a separate heading. I shall not, therefore, repeat it here.

In certain cases, such as, on return to the village after waging wars or bloody fueds, they are to perform Marang Harikka which means elimination of the marang evil. It is a sort of cleaning up or purifying ceremony having close resemblance with *Prayaschitta* or *Suddhi* ceremony of the Hindus. Marang in this sense is unholy or what the Hindus call *asuchi* (unclean).

Accidents, such as major injury of the body or mauling by tiger, bear, elephant, etc., are considered as marang. They consider that such accidents happen due to the wrath of Marang. Some people make offerings to Marang before seeds are sown in the field otherwise, they believe that there will be a failure of crop due to the wrath of Marang. In this sense, Marang is considered as a Mette, i.e., a deity. To use the dress or other belongings of the person killed by tiger or other wild animals is marang. Death caused by drowning, fire, accidental fall from a height are all considered as marang. It is not possible to give the full list of marang.

I have not been able to understand the actual unconscious mechanism of marang although its certain characteristics particularly the anxiety and apprehension of danger, and also the avoidance of the oedipus and incest situation are obvious. I am not sure whether the anxiety associated with marang is an expression of their apprehension of punishment due to the unconscious guilt sense

connected with the oedipus situation. As far as I could understand it, marang has its origin in the repression of the oedipus wishes which have been found to be true in connection with other social customs of the Garos. Further work is necessary in this connection.

In the general sense of marang in which the word is often used by the Garos, I think, it is connected with the fear of blood, and the guilt sense associated with it, which I have discussed in the chapter, "Fear of blood". Secondly, it is connected with anything which is apprehended as dangerous and may cause death or infirmity. Particularly any sexual violation is marang. Fear of blood besides the factor of the fear of annihilation of narcissism in death has other unconscious components. The unconscious fear of castration should also be taken into account in this connection together with a third factor, the guilt sense associated with the wish to shed others' blood or manifestation of aggression and death wish against parental images.

CHAPTER XI

Fear of Blood

Similar to the fear of the dead discussed in the next chapter, there is another fear which is more or less universal, namely, the fear of blood. Loss of blood is considered dangerous and is accompanied by anxiety.

The Christians consider wine as blood and bread as flesh of Christ. According to Hindu custom, any sore or bleeding debars a person from performing any socio-religious rites. He is considered as impure or unholy (asuchi). During menstrual period, a woman is similarly considered dirty or unholy. So also, the animal or bird with ulcer or any wound in its body is considered unsuited for sacrificial purposes before a deity. On the other hand, blood and flesh of the sacrificial animal or bird are offered to the deity for his or her appeasement.

The Garos also follow the same custom regarding the offering of the blood to the deity. But besides blood, they also put the body hair of animals or plumes of birds offered on the Sambasia, i.e., the altar erected by them. I have mentioned about the Marang Harikka ceremony performed by the Garos to purify themselves after they come back from a war or from a head hunting expedition. Here also it is the same fear or sense of unholiness or of dirt associated with the blood of the men killed that is the main issue. It is a marang for the other members of the house to go out of the village when a child is born in their house. During the menstrual period, the women do not go out of the village. If by any accident profuse bleeding is caused, the injured person does not go out of the village. In some such cases, other members of the house also and at times, though very rarely, all the members of the village refrain from going out of the village. (During the Marang and also Hasong worship no villager is allowed to go out of the village area. Not only this, if any outsider enters the village area on the day of the worship of the two Mettes mentioned above, he is not allowed to go out of the village area till the period of restriction is over which usually runs for two to three days.) These customs have some obvious advantage to the society. If any danger is apprehended, members of the house—nay, the entire body of the villagers—in case, the situation is grave keep indoors so that their help may be available whenever needed. Sometimes, it may be

for consideration of health that the affected persons keep indoors, as for example, during menstruation and profuse bleeding due to accident.

The excessive fear of blood might have been considered natural in the more primitive stage of societies but at the present day blood should not give rise to such anxiety situation. The analysis of neurotic patients shows how strongly anxiety is felt by them if there be a slight cut in the body. A scratch from the razor blade during shaving or of a pen knife while sharpening the pencil, may be sufficient for the patient to suffer from an overwhelming anxiety. This anxiety may even last for the whole life.

No physiological explanation can justify this anxiety. The reason is to be sought in the psychological plain. Psycho-analysts know that partial repression due to conflicts gives rise to anxiety. In the analysis of neurotics, fear of blood is found in some patients to be associated with the castration fear. This castration fear, according to the theory of Bose, is the result of a partially repressed wish for castration. From the materials of case histories, I have come to the conclusion that this repressed castration wish is associated with the passive wishes of the patient, which are also repressed. When this passivity is adjusted the anxiety associated with the castration is also adjusted, and with this the fear of blood is also removed.

But this is not true in all cases. From the wall drawings of the cavemen and from other primitive beliefs as also from the belief existing in the civilized societies, we know that blood is considered as the vital element of life. In the cave drawings, a red line drawn here and there in the picture of the animals or men is interpreted as blood which purports to indicate that the object drawn is alive. In some neurotics also, the same conception that blood is life, is discernible. It is found to be associated with the primary narcissism of the patient. So any loss of blood means loss of the ego.

Here we are faced with another problem. Freud has posited death instinct together with eros, i.e., life instinct as the two fundamental concepts. If this be true, there can be no reason why one should feel anxiety when the question of losing the life comes. This phenomenon can only be explained if we consider that the fear of loss or death is a repression product. We have both the wish to live and the wish to die. Gratification of an instinct must bring pleasure. But this may not be the case if one of the instincts or wishes (the term wish it may be noted is the psychological

counterpart of the biological term instinct) be repressed. When the death wish is also freed from repression one cannot feel any anxiety in death. Hindu philosophy mentions about such a state of mind when life and death are equally valued, and no anxiety is experienced by the *yogi*.

In the case of the Garos, it is difficult to say which of the two factors is responsible for their fear of blood. It may be presumed that castration fear is more common, but I think the narcissistic component is primary. Castration fear also is connected with the same primary narcissism, the loss of which is fraught with danger. Therefore, at the possibility of approach of such a danger the alarm is raised in the form of anxiety. The sense of impurity or dirt connected with blood in some cases referred to above and the urge to clean up are nothing but products of the same repression mechanism expressed in different forms. The same fear or anxiety is experienced if the purification ceremonies or other formalities connected with the different situations are not gone through.

CHAPTER XII

The Fear of the Dead

Frazer has collected valuable data regarding the fear of the dead in the primitive people. In his book The Fear of the Dead in primitive religion, he says, ".....enough perhaps has been said to convince us that fear of the spirit of the dead, whether men or animals, has haunted the mind of primitive man from time immemorial all over the world, from equator to the poles, and we may summarise that the same fear has gone far to shape the moulds into which religious thought has run ever since feeble man began to mediate on the great mysteries by which our little life on earth is encompassed." It is natural to think that every religious rite in its early stage was nothing but the effort at the appeasement of the wrath of some evil power. In his primitive stage of existence, danger surrounded man from every possible corner. Ignorant about the nature of the external reality and devoid of the controlling powers over it, man with his comparatively feeble intellectual capacity, had no way out than to be timid and apprehensive of danger from the environment and natural phenomena. In the life of the comparatively primitive tribe as the Garos, this timidity is fairly prominent. Their religion consists of offerings to the Mette who bites human beings and thus causes illness and other disasters. They seem to have no other philosophy behind their religious or socio-religious structure.

We have also seen how they are afraid of the ghosts and of the Mimang, i.e., the spirit of the dead. A Garo does not pass by a burial or a cremation place particularly after dusk. They have the belief that the Mimang may take any form either of men or of animals and allure a person to a suitable place and do some harm to him. I have discussed about the malevolent nature of Garo deities. I shall now discuss their fear of the dead.

This fear is a common feature of every society primitive or civilized. I shall discuss the Garo belief about the dead and shall compare them with the ideas of psycho-neurotic patients. The Garos are not only afraid of the dead but also afraid of respectable foreigners. On many occassions, during my tour I saw both men and women quickly ran into the forest or took their shelter in the dark corner of their house when they saw me approaching them. Those who came into frequent contact with the people of the neigh-

bouring districts or have travelled abroad on business or during war, have shed their fear of the foreigners to a great extent. Yet many of them are suspicious of the intention of such new comers in their village. Closer acquaintance gradually dispels this misapprehension.

After the death of a person, they offer food and drink daily to the Mimang. There are two motives for these offerings. One is motivated by love, and the food and drink is given to the Mimang for its comfort and pleasure. They consider that the Mimang needs food and drink just as a living man needs. There is another aspect of this formality. It is the apprehension of danger which the Mimang may cause to them in its wrath for being deprived of its due food, etc. The idea is that the Mimang becomes extra powerful and can do almost anything it likes when it is enraged. This idea is important from the psychological standpoint.

It is a common experience that one feels uncanny or becomes timid after the death of a very near and dear one. It is surprising why one should be afraid of the spirit of the person who was an object of deep love before death. The Garos say, "Because it is Mimang it can do harm, it is no longer a man." So the human qualities of love and consideration are considered to be absent in a Mimang. The Mimang may at will respect these qualities or may discard them. Thus it can work any mischief it likes. It is not understood why a Mimang should be considered as possessing evil intentions. The Garos could not enlighten me further on this point. In the analysis of patients, I came across the same conception regarding the spirit of the dead. Analysis revealed the following ideas connected with it. Every human being has a mysterious power in him or her. Some call it soul, others call it power. During the life time of a man, this power is kept within bounds by the limitations of the body. On death, the inner power liberated from body can assume its full stature. This explains their idea of the mysterious power of the Mimang. So the Mimang of a child can exercise as much power as the Mimang of a grown up person. But this does not explain why should the Mimang have the tendency to do harm to its once beloved friends and relatives. Further analysis of patients brought to light that they posit both good and bad tendencies in every one including a beloved person. It is this bad tendency which they are afraid of. The conception then comes to this that the body may perish but the tendencies live. The tendency to hate that is present more or less in every individual takes the shape of a wish to do harm to persons. We are thus faced with the fundamental conception of the theory of ambivalance propounded by Freud. Love and hate remain side by side

in the unconscious of an individual as tendencies. A tendency is vague and remains as an undefined concept, so long as it does not take the form of a wish. Viewing from this standpoint, we may say that patients consider that the dead person, during his life time, had wishes in his mind to cause some harm to them. In some case, this is found to be the result of a projection mechanism of the patient's own evil wishes against the dead. I have seen very loving mothers fearing the spirit of her dead baby. I have also seen mothers who did not feel any difficulty in living alone at night in the room where the child died. In analysis of patients, it is seen that where love dominates over hate one is not likely to experience any fear of danger from the spirit of the dead. But where the element of hate or death wishes against the child is not successfully repressed one is likely to be afraid of the spirit of the dead.

One point still remains to be understood. The question remains as to how the spirit of the dead acquires the enormous power ascribed to it. The child is the farther of the man. That is to say that all the possibilities of the future life are embodied in the childhood. In other words, psychologically speaking, it may be said that all the wishes of the adult are there in the child in their elementary form. I have indicated how a neurotic patient thinks about the spirit liberated from the bounds of the body limitations. There is another factor which is traceable in this connection. I have already mentioned about the projection mechanism. Besides that, the infantile hostile father is projected on the bodiless idea of the spirit of the dead, which then assumes unusual power and appears as dangerous. These two factors, namely, the projection of one's own hostile wishes, and also of the infantile hostile parental imago, on to the spirit of the dead give to it the character of vague and unlimited source of danger. Infantile idea of omnipotence when projected on the spirit of the dead may also bring about this phenomenon, but I think the other two factors mentioned here are more important.

CHAPTER XIII

Composite Names

In the mythological stories and also in the names of some of the deities, it is observed that the name of the hero or of the deity instead of being a single name is a combination of two names which are coupled together to form one name. This characteristic is to be found in older stories only. In more recent stories, these compound names do not appear. In the compound name, the first part usually stands for the name of the male, and second represents the name of the female. In certain cases, this remark does not hold good. I was told that the composite name represented one single individual and not a couple. I mention here only a few such names, e.g., Thaththara-Rabuga, Brara-Dogini (names of deities) Bone Gilje, Noromande, Bandengfa Chundengfa, etc. (names of human beings), etc. There are numerous other such names particularly in their mythological stories. This characteristic feature demands careful consideration and deeper understanding to appreciate the mental mechanism working behind it. Freud in his paper on "The Antithetical Sense of Primal Words" has given illuminating explanation on similar subject. He has given some examples from the work of the philologist, K. Abel, in which certain words of ancient Egyptian language convey two meanings of opposite nature. It will be profitable to quote from Freud's work the relevant portion which may help us to understand the mechanism of this compound name formation amongst the Garos. Freud quotes from Abel, "Now in the Egyptian language, this unique relic of a primitive world, we find a fair number of words with two meanings, one of which says the exact opposite of the other. Imagine, if one can imagine anything so obviously nonsensical, that the word 'strong' in German means 'weak' as well as 'strong'; that the noun 'light' is used in Berlin to denote 'darkness' as well as 'light';..... the ancient Egyptian habitually exercised this astonishing practice in their language....." "In view of this and many similar cases of antithetical meaning,... there can be no room for doubt that in at *least one* language there were quite a large number of words which at one and the same time denoted a thing and the opposite of this thing....." Freud in the same paper writes, "Before we make any attempt at explanation, another still more incomprehensible procedure in the Egyptian tongue must be mentioned. Of all tthe eccentricities of the Egyptian lexicon perhaps the most extraordinary is this: that, in addition to the words

which unite antithetical meanings, it possesses other compound words in which two syllables of contrary meaning are united into a whole, which then has the meaning of only one of its constituent members. Thus in this extraordinary language, there are not only words which denote both "strong" and "weak", or "command" as well as "obey"; there are also compound words like "old young", "far near", "bind loose", "outside inside"..... ; and of these, in spite of their conjunction of the extremes of difference, the first means only "young", and second only "near", the third only "bind", and fourth only "inside"..... So that in these compound words contradictory concepts are quite intentionally combined, not in order to create a third concept, as happens now and then in Chinese, but only in order to express, by means of the combination of the two, the meaning of one of its contradictory members, which alone would have meant the same." Freud has remarked that "Our conception arises through the comparison." We have the conception of light only because there is darkness otherwise the word light would not have any special meaning for us. He also says, "....everything on this planet is relative and has independent existence only in so far as it is distinguished in its relations to and from other things....." Freud has further mentioned, "The proof of originally contradictory meanings, easily made in Egyptian, extends also, according to Abel, to the Semitic and Indo-European tongues. How far this may happen in other language-groups remains to be seen; for although the antithesis of meaning must originally have been there to the thinking members of each race, this need not necessarily have become recognizable or have been retained, everywhere in the meanings of words." Freud has also compared this phenomenon with that of the dream work and also with the tendency of the children at "reversal of sound" in play.

In the examples mentioned in the paper from the Garo names of deities and mythological personalities, some difference in the formation of compound names is clearly noticeable. In the case of the Garos, however, sometimes the male and the female names form one composite name, whereas in some other case, it appears from the name that only names of two male persons very rarely two female names combine to form one name. But as in the case of the Egyptians, mentioned by Freud, so also in the Garo names one portion of the name particularly the first portion of the combined name is more often meant. In comparing with the dream work, Freud suggested this particular tendency to have its root in this expression by opposite as is commonly found in dream. In the case of the Garo names, another fundamental psychological factor is possibly at work. In my opinion, this feature will be

better explained if we assume that two names join together to signify a composite formation of two personalities in one. During analysis of patients, it is found, in certain cases, that the parental images, viz., that of the father and mother partially fuse into one composite image in the unconscious of the patient. This phase clears off and the two distinctive features, that of the father and of the mother images, are separated and each of them takes his or her own place in the development of personality of the patient concerned. The Hindu concept of a composite image of *Ardhanariswara,* in which form, the right half represent the form of *Shiva* (*Hara*) and the left half represents the form of *Parbati* (*Gouri*). I may suggest further that this composite image has a basic root in the bisexual composition of the psyche. Viewing from this standpoint, the composite name of male and females into one, as represented in the Garo mythology, etc., we might assume that in the earlier stage of the primitive culture, the Garos were in the same level as with those patients about whom I have already mentioned. Based on this bisexual foundation of human nature composite name formation, therefore, is likely to represent a level of cultural knowledge where the parental images are fused together not completely but partially to form composite names in which both the parents are mentioned. It has some similarity with the condensation mechanism of dream work. It may be mentioned that in the case of the patients in whom the composite parental image was found, it served the purpose of one of the two conditions, viz., in one case this opposite image meant a complete whole which represented the most powerful force, which could not have been gained by one of the parental images individually. It should be mentioned that analytical experience shows that a child in its early days seeks strength from the mother and feels secured in the presence of a sympathetic mother. So for the child the origin of strength is the mother or her substitute. It is curious to note that in the Hindu mythology and concept *sakti,* i.e., strength or power has been conceived as a female deity. Every woman is but part of that eternal sakti. Does the female component of the psychic conception of bisexuality serve this purpose too ? Most probably the answer is in the affirmative. In another sense, the female component in the composite image serve the purpose of a modifier of the ruthless destructive male parent. It is difficult now to trace from the present day Garo which of these factors influenced the tendency to form composite names. According to the different situations, either the one or the other might have its influence on the formation of such names.

In the example quoted, Bandengfa Chundengfa literally means "father of Bandeng, father of Chendeng". The father of the two

may be the same person or may be two different individuals. It is more likely that they meant one person by this name at least this was what they understood by it now. Bandeng and Chundeng were powerful men, possibly imaginary persons. In that case, their father must have been thought of as very powerful person of great strength and skill. The composite name in this case, then, signified greater strength. It may also indicate two allied or dissimilar aspects of the same or different person grouped together as is found in the mechanism of dream condensation. The combination of two female names into one, I think, has the same significance as that of the two male ones combined together.

The other possibility of imaging the male and female in one composition though in separate bodies is when they together form into a pleasant and sympathetic or hostile couple, e.g., *Radha Krishna* or *Rudra* (*Bhairab*) *Kali* of the Hindus. It is found that the conception of sympathetic parental images is rare in the Garos. It has some similarity with the dream mechanism where multiplicity means greater strength. Such use of superfluous superlatives in expression to signify greatness, power, etc., is a common feature in children language as well as in folktales and mythological stories.

CHAPTER XIV

Some Jokes, Slangs and Abusive Languages

One thing which appeared to me rather striking is that the Garos generally do not sit together for gossiping. They exchange very few words amongst themselves other than on business. In the nokpanthe, mythological story telling or singing goes on more freely. I have heard very few jokes from them. Some of their jokes and abusive words are given below:

GARO WORDS	ENGLISH RENDERING
Achak	dog
Achak fa	father of a dog
Achak chagabba	a dog eater
Bukma dalbijok	a person with enlarged belly, refers to pregnancy.
Goshen	the name of a person who had sexual intercourse with his daughter.
Makra	monkey
Makra pisha	a baby of a monkey
Marakkha	barking deer, the reference is to its loud barking sound.
Mami manjok	has got the maternal aunt, refers to sex relation with her.
Mami nok nekjok	has seen the house of the maternal aunt. The reference is to the joy for the possibility of the sex relation which he may have with her.
Matchi	the name of a group of the Garos who eat dog, snake, etc., and are referred to here as low caste.
Numel chadra	a fat girl
Numel mong thujok	slept with an unmarried girl
Numel ukho salle khatjok	the unmarried girl fled away dragging him with her.
Oallo gru dakjok	performed illegal sexual intercourse at night
Rapang gua chajok	has eaten betel nut. In a joke symbolically it means to have had sexual intercourse.
Rigong or Rigol	penis, some times they call a person 'rigol' in joke.
Ramkhan	name of a person who had coitus with a sow
Shangmaratcha	a mythical person who was deaf
Saua	thief

In the few jokes, etc., mentioned above reference to bestiality and oedipus and incest situations are found to be more frequent. Analysis of mental patients shows that in the unconscious object of bestiality stands for the degraded parent image either of the father or the mother. The indications of oedipus fixation of the Garos comes to light again in this connection as well as it was found to hold good in many other aspects of their life.

CHAPTER XV

Conclusion

In the foregoing chapters of this publication, I discussed some main topics related to the Garo life and society from the psycho-analytical standpoint. My main aim in doing so was to make an attempt at an understanding of the deeper underlying psychological factors which helped growth of the particular form of their (Garo) society and also to try to understand the predominating unconscious motive forces of the Garo mind. I endeavoured also to trace their cultural level from the viewpoint of libidinal development. In view of the limited compass of my theme presented in this book, I have here refrained from dwelling elaborately on all aspects of Garo life. A summary of the conclusions arrived at in the different chapters as also in the relevant papers published in different issues of 'Samiksa', the journal of the Indian Psycho-analytical Society, will, I think, help us to get a clearer picture of the psyche of the Garos.

In the chapter under heading, "Mythology", I have discussed the pre-eminence of the incest wishes and electra complex. In a general sense, incestuous desires towards an elder sister may be considered as oedipus desire. So also the younger sister may be looked upon as a young oedipus image. This generalisation may be amply coroborated from the analytical experience gained from the psycho-neurotic as well as from the psychotic patients. So we may say the main urge behind these stories (not all) is the gratification of the repressed oedipus complex.

The matriarchal society of the Garos, as I have discussed in the chapter, 'Matriarchy', has been possible because of the psychic fixation of the Garos at the oedipus level according to the Freudian conception of the libidinal development.

Discussing 'Totemism', I have tried to show that the apprehension of danger associated with the unconscious sense of punishment (castration) from the parental image on the one hand, and a wish to depend on the helpful protector on the other, gave rise to the cult of totem formation, which is a parental symbol, either male or female.

Analysing the nokpanthe (dormitory) system, the same con-

clusion was arrived at, viz., in the cultural development of the Garos, their unconscious oedipus and incest wishes are comparatively strong. The nokpanthe system came into existence as a social measure against this predominant tendency.

The Marang conception of the Garos, among other factors, indicates the strong unconscious hostile wishes against the parental images and its resultant castration fear, as a punishment against any such intrusion into the domain of the father. In the published paper on "The Dreams of the Garos", it will be found that the same castration fear, according to Freudian interpretation, is the more common feature of the Garo dream interpretation.

In the chapter "Fear of Blood", I tried to show how this fear is likely to have been associated with castration fear. It is well known that one of the most important factors in the causation of this castration fear is the repressed oedipus or incest wish. So in the case of the Garos, we may presume that the same oedipus wishes and therefore of punishment caused their exaggerated fear of blood.

The fear of the dead as envisaged among the Garos has been compared with the same fear of the other people as also with that of the mental patients. The conclusion arrived at was that the projection of one's own hostile wishes and also of the infantile hostile parental imago, on to the spirit of the dead, give to it the character of vague and unlimited source of danger. Here again, the same fear of punishment may be connected with castration anxiety which causes the fear of the dead.

From the composite names used by the Garos, it was found that where the composition of names was between that of a male and a female it may be conceived that the female exerts some sort of modification in the hostile concept of the strong father. This interpretation again indicates the oedipus situation where the father is considered as hostile and the mother as the protector. This stage of psychic adjustment has a strong similarity with the "Ardhanariswar", a composite figure of Shiva and Gouri, half male and half female diety of the Hindus. The other possibility of imaging the male and female in one composition, though in separate bodies is when they together form into a pleasant and sympathetic or hostile couple, e.g., *Radha-Krishna* or *Rudra* (*Bhairab*) *Kali* of the Hindu dieties. It is found that the conception of sympathetic parental images is rather rare in the Garos. In the other situation where both the names are of male or female persons, it may denote greater strength or different aspects of the

personality. It's similarity with dream mechanism and children language has been indicated.

From the few jokes, slangs and abusive languages used by the Garos—it was found that they predominantly refer to oedipus situations and bestiality. In the unconscious object of bestiality stands for the degraded parent images, either the father or the mother. Here again, the same factor of oedipus fixation of the Garos come to light.

My published paper on "Attempt at Interpretation of a Garo Dream" will indicate the oedipus wish which excited the dream referred to in the said paper. I have several other actual dreams in my collection from which the predominance of the oedipus feature could be easily ascertained. During the latter part of my field work, I attempted actual analysis of some dreams by taking free associations from the dreamer. These attempts were not very successful. Although some very valuable materials and hints could be gathered from them. Most of the associations given by them were not really free association. It is not possible to get such associations readily. Most of these attempts came to a stop when oedipus or incest wishes or incidents of similar nature came out. The dreamer invariably opened his eyes and sat up with a bashful laughter saying *Namja,* i.e., "it is not good" (bad). I am sure further efforts would yeild good result in course of time.

The different varieties of their songs have been discussed in my published paper named "Garo Songs". There also the preponderance of the expression of the oedipus wish with its corollary, the castration fear have been traced.

The paper on the "Formation of Garo Clan" will show how in this aspect of the Garo society the same incest (oedipus) wishes were at the root of the clan formation. Although the unconscious drive could not find its full gratification by this form of expression. It was but a vain attempt to avoid the ostracism from the father as a result of their incest wishfulfilment.

Lastly, in my paper on "A Psychological Study of Colour Preference of the Garos", I indicated that the repressed oedipus tendency prompted the Garos to select (mostly) blue as the best colour.

From what have been traced so far in this present chapter, the conclusion that becomes irresistable is that their oedipus fixation with all its corollaries are the most important psychic factors

determining the various aspects of the Garo life and their social structure, discussed in this book.

This knowledge will help us to understand the Garos better, and we shall now be in a better position to find out the ways and forms of social reforms which might be beneficial for them. Social reforms thrust on a people without having a clear understanding of their psychic characteristic, saps their vitality. Knowing that the oedipus urge is the mainspring of the unconscious psyche of the Garos, we can venture to formulate suitable social and educational reforms which may successfully improve the lot of the Garos. Such scientific reform measures alone may save them from inevitable dicadence which they are otherwise liekly to suffer like so many tribes which ultimately perished or are now fast approaching decay.

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ABBREVIATION USED FOR JOURNALS AND PERIODICALS

A	.. ..	Anthropos
E R E	.. ..	Hasting's Encyclopedia of Religion and Ethics
F L	.. ..	Folk Love
I A	.. ..	Indian Antiquary
J D L	.. ..	Journal of the Department of Letters of the University of Calcutta
J R A I	.. ..	Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute
M	.. ..	Man
M I A	.. ..	Man in India
S	.. ..	Samiksa (Journal of the Indian Psycho-analytical Society)

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